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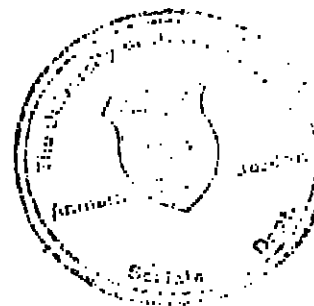
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## The Times Literary Supplement

FRIDAY 10 FEBRUARY 1984 No 4,219 60p



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كتاب المسألة











# Pot-shots at the leftists

P. J. Parish

KENNETH S. LYNN  
*The Air-Line to Seattle: Studies in Literary and Historical Writing about America*  
 227pp. University of Chicago Press. £14.  
 022649838

The sheer pleasure of reading this book is intensified by a distinct feeling of guilt that one is enjoying it so immensely. There is about Kenneth Lynn an engaging air of the naughty schoolboy sticking out his tongue at the pompous, the pretentious and the merely fashionable, or spray-painting the walls of academe with graffiti rudely proclaiming such messages as "Ralph Waldo Emerson was a humbug", or "Ernest Hemingway's war wounds did not hurt very much", or "Eleanor Roosevelt was a lesbian - OK?".

Lynn is a professor of history who has probably written more on American literature than American history. In this collection of sixteen articles and reviews, all published before, all but one in the last seven years, he ranges widely and exuberantly over a remarkable variety of subject-matter, from Walter Lippmann's public philosophy to Scott Fitzgerald's private parts. The strongest emphasis is in fact on the inter-war years, and half the pieces in the book deal with the political, social and literary world of the 1920s and 30s. But there are also astrigent comments on Emerson and Whitman, Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Hutchinson, Leo Marx and Eugene Genovese. As a critic, Lynn is both versatile and formidable, happiest of all, perhaps, when he can, at one and the same time, damn both author and subject, as in his caustic review of Ronald Steel's *Walter Lippmann and the Twentieth Century*.

The commonest problem with essays and reviews collected in book form is that they lack coherence. However, in this case, for all the eclecticism of Lynn's interests and the variety of his reviewing, there are strong unifying themes and constant preoccupations, which inform and impregnate the whole book. They put more plainly, the same bees buzz happily in his bonnet for more than two hundred pages. The opening essay on Santayana provides not merely a title but a kind of epigraph for the entire work. Lynn uses Santayana's contempt for many of his Harvard contemporaries as a launching-pad for his own attack upon elitist intellectuals, comfortably cushioned by their old-fashioned ideas and their assumptions of moral superiority, and contriving to "shut the mucker village out", in Santayana's phrase, even though "the air-line to Seattle whizzes just beyond the fence".

Lynn shares Santayana's dismay at the deep division in America life between theory and practice, ideals and experience, bookishness and business. As he examines one major literary or political figure after another, Lynn's main concern is often with the relationship between the public figure and the private man or woman. He chides Emerson's biographers for imitating their hero's preference for "the vaporousness of an ideal world" over "the inherent worth of sense experience"; consequently, they have "traditionally under-emphasized his life as a man and over-emphasized his life as a thinker". Lynn clearly believes in the value - indeed, the necessity - of investigating the emotional problems, neuroses, moral blemishes and errant private behaviour of writers, politicians, and, for that matter, historians, and critics, in order to understand and evaluate their life's work. It is important to Lynn to establish the point that Emerson married his ailing first wife in order to acquire her fortune, and he gleefully exposes Emerson's "dirty little secret": that while calling upon students in his American Scholar address to avoid involvement in business and to scorn material values, he was living on a subsidy derived from the fortune of a Boston merchant. Similarly, he regards Eleanor Roosevelt's relationship with Lorena Hickok not merely as an intriguing story in itself but as a vital clue to understanding her emergence as a public figure in her own right and, also, more indirectly, her husband's personal and political behaviour. Again, when reviewing Walter Lippmann's career, Lynn focuses on what he calls "the moral history of a moralist". He

dwells upon Lippmann's avoidance of military service in 1917-18, upon his embarrassment about his own Jewish origins, and, above all, upon the affair with the wife of his close friend Hamilton Fish Armstrong, in which Lippmann betrayed a trust and wrecked two marriages.

It may be unfashionable today to make such close connections between private morality and public reputation, but it may still be illuminating. Certainly Lynn turns his near-obsession with such questions into a formidable weapon with which to assail hypocrisy, pretence and double standards. The essential link between Lynn's literary and historical criticism is his willingness to take his stand as a moral critic, first of all.

The other leitmotif running through these essays springs from Lynn's political or ideological, rather than his moral, convictions. There is a kind of maverick right-wing populism never far below the surface of his writing. It comes as no surprise to find that half of these pieces first appeared in *Commentary*. (Even so, one is still taken aback to find Ronald Reagan's trite little joke to his wife, after he had been shot - "Honey, I forgot to duck" - held up as a shining example of grace and gaiety under stress, rather than as a line left over from one of his early movies, which is surely nearer its proper level.) Lynn's ideological standpoint is most clearly defined by the targets which he selects for attack. He reserves his most withering fire for the American left in all its twentieth-century diversity, from the communists and fellow-travellers of the 1930s to modern Marxists and Marcuseans. He is particularly severe on the "adolescent myrmidons of the New Left" but, if anything, he thinks even less highly of those whom he repeatedly labels the "left-liberals", or "elitist liberals" who believe that only the select few know what is good for the many, or "the left-liberal intelligentsia of New York" - and of Cambridge, Massachusetts - which was frightened out of its wits by the campus upheavals of the 1960s. A list of the historians on whom Lynn trains his sights - Richard Hofstadter, Vann Woodward, Bernard Bailyn, Arthur Schlesinger, Leo Marx, Eugene Genovese, Garry Wills, Ronald Steel - would cover the whole spectrum from the most old-fashioned "elitist liberal" to the much harder left of a later generation. Arthur Schlesinger is perhaps the ideal Lynn target, on two counts.

## The beast in man

Stephen R. L. Clark

MARY ALLEN  
*Animals in American Literature*  
 210pp. University of Illinois Press. £9.  
 0252 009754

Mary Allen's study of the rôles imposed upon non-human animals by American writers draws heavily on other literary studies, some unpublished. This sometimes leads her to support remarks of dubious meaning and value, when she touches on matters outside her own professional competence. What, for example, should Homeric scholars make of the insane judgment that "for Homer things exist in their own right, with nothing to sustain them but their solitary power and the earth upon which they stand"? Or historians of the mastery-fishhood that "it is no coincidence" that Moby-Dick was published eight years before *The Origin of Species*? Or students of British (by which Ms Allen means English) literature of the claim that, in our romantic poetry, "nature is usually seen from inside the house so that features are bridled", or that Blake's tiger is as dead as Coleridge's albino, or that Kipling's jungle beasts are civilized and unfetters?

Claims of this kind are the small talk of the literary salon, and best forgotten, but Ms Allen discusses individual American writers, well and though the theme she defects is perhaps not as common to them all as she suggests. It is widespread and worth noticing. This is the image of the (male) animal as wild and unconfined, owing no allegiance to friends or family or city-at-home society. Kipling's jungle lives under law (except for the Badger), but Edgar Rice Burroughs's knowledge of the individual ferocity of his thesis is best underlined

He is a fully paid-up member of the "left-liberal intelligentsia" and he is also willing, at the drop of a hat (as he has recently demonstrated yet again), to protest that stories about sexual adventures of any one of his Democratic heroes are untrue, or, if they are true, they do not matter, or, if they do matter, they can be excused or explained away.

The multiple absurdities of the modern American left have of course provided ample opportunity for Lynn to show off his powers of ridicule and invective. It has to be admitted, too, that he is not a man to forgo the opportunity of a shot at a sitting target; indeed, he is only too eager to blow it to smithereens. He is relentless to the point of overkill in exposing the glaring discrepancies between what the wretched Malcolm Cowley actually said and did in the 1930s, and the account of those same years which he wrote much later in *The Dream of the Golden Mountains*. However, the real villains of this piece are the critics who praised the cogency, reliability and honesty of Cowley's memoir.

When he takes on tougher adversaries or more intricate problems, Lynn himself is prone to overstate his case or oversimplify the issues, or to rely too heavily on a clever turn of phrase. For example, his summary of Genovese's explanation of why Southern slaves so seldom rebelled is a gross over-simplification which is half-travesty, half-caricature. Again, Lynn condemns Mary Chesnut for perpetrating in her so-called diary "one of the most audacious frauds in the history of American literature", and Vann Woodward, the editor of the 1981 edition of the "diary", for refusing to acknowledge that it was a fraud. But he fails to note that, in contrast to earlier published versions, Woodward's vastly superior edition does not use the word "diary" in its title, or that, when Mrs Chesnut died in 1886, she had not brought her constantly re-written work to a stage where she regarded it as publishable. In these circumstances, to accuse either author or editor of being party to a hoax is surely without any justification whatever.

Fairness is probably not a virtue which Lynn particularly esteems; perhaps it smacks too much of "elitist liberalism". When the instincts of the impish schoolboy or the graffiti-writer take over, he occasionally uses his powerful wit

- more bludgeon than rapier - to inflict grievous bodily harm on innocent victims. On the other hand, dullness is an accusation that can never be levelled against him, although it is a little unfortunate that two of the longest essays in the book - on Hemingway and on Greenwich Village - are perhaps the least exciting and most predictable. With these possible exceptions, the entertainment value remains remarkably high, and, while they entertain, these essays also instruct and provoke, and cast new light upon familiar topics.

On the whole, the historical rather than the literary essays show Lynn at his best, and sometimes at his most outrageous. His appraisal of Lippmann is welcome for its abandonment of the unduly reverential tone, so often adopted towards someone who has long deserved to be viewed with a much sharper critical eye. His reassessment of Frederick Lewis Allen's classic account of the 1920s, *Only Yesterday*, includes the shrewd observation that Allen wrote not so much about American society itself as about what caught the headlines in the sensation-hungry newspapers of that decade. Lynn enjoys himself immensely at the expense of some of Garry Wills's more far-fetched assertions in *Inventing America* as he struggles to "supply the history of the Republic with as pink a dawn as possible". But perhaps the most dazzling display of critical pyrotechnics comes in the essay on three "repressive historians". Bernard Bailyn, Leo Marx and Eugene Genovese make an unlikely and uncomfortable trio, but Lynn's severe critique of both their methods and message, while it occasionally tips over the edge from iconoclastic wit into malicious glee, does also make provocative and important points about recent American historiography. One of Lynn's more charitable comments is that all three historians bear the marks, and the scars, of the times through which they have lived, notably the turbulent years of the 1960s. But surely Lynn has been scarred by the same experiences. How much of his mordant wit, his fierce invective, his censoriousness, his preoccupation with particular moral and intellectual issues, is to be explained as a reaction to the upheavals of those same years? Professor Lynn should be encouraged to go on throwing stones, but he might be well advised to protect his own glass-house with some good strong screens.

common as she claims.

The opposite extreme to such self-projective identification is apparently achieved by Steinbeck, for whom (as for the more extreme of vivisectionists) concern for animals is an infantile obsession. "Maturity" lies in a willingness to butcher creatures, and no longer be disturbed by any thought of their reaction to the event. Lennie Small, in *Of Mice and Men*, displays "affection" for mice and puppies by stroking and caressing them to death: the "affection" is an aberration - "a transference of his need for human connection". Animals are toys, for those to whom they are not merely merchandise, or puzzles in engineering. "It is very often boredom and gratification in power that lead to the many deaths in Steinbeck's animal kingdom. It serves him well, allowing a freedom to enjoy blood that would not be his in a world limited to man."

Such an indifferentist attitude to our kindred is, of course, as deluded as that which expects animals to behave as pre-adolescent fantasy world wish, which lives its fantasy life in them. It is a relief to remember that London's message was that there were many forms of goodness, that genuine freedom lies not in loneliness but in the loving pack, that energy can be domestic too. London understood Darwin, and Herbert Spencer, better than those who see no more in life than the war of each against all. Wolves and human beings alike are social animals, and genuine asexual and egotistic solitaires are rare. What would men be like in a world without women, Mark Twain was asked, replying with commendable accuracy "Scots".

Mary Allen has found a topic worth exploring, and provokes reflections on the follies, crasies of humankind, and of Americans. She should be thanked for it.

# Intensely reserved

Andrew Motion

NORMAN PAGE  
*A. E. Housman: A Critical Biography*  
 266pp. Macmillan. £17.50.  
 0333 343808

Why do we need a new life of A. E. Housman? The last one - by Richard Perceval Graves - appeared as recently as 1979, and although its criticism can hardly be called rigorous, and its facts are sometimes not facts but well-urged surmises, it is obviously efficient, unsentimental and readable. Norman Page is understandably keen to make these vices seem as pernicious, and these virtues as unremarkable, as he reasonably can. He begins his book with an essay on the name and nature of biography which takes Graves to task for making "excursion[s] into romance", and insists on the value of his own fresh material - especially the papers of Housman's friend Andrew Gow and the diaries of Arthur Benson (which have recently been released from a fifty-year embargo). As it turns out, even Graves's more extravagant conjectures have done little actual harm, and

the new material - though interesting - tends only to confirm the impression of Housman which has been clear for some time.

All of which seems to suggest that Page's book is otiose, and that its fate will be unlucky (Page was already well advanced in his research when he discovered that Graves was going to pre-empt him). In fact it is by far the best biography of Housman we have, and anyone finding that they are to Page what Page was to Graves should think more than twice about continuing. The success of the book lies less in its discovery of new information than in its loyalty to provable fact, and in its sympathy with Housman's dynamic mixture of reserve and intensity. Sympathy, of course, implies affection, and while this is plainly felt, it never emerges in a way which obscures the disagreeable aspects of Housman's character. Page believes Housman to be "a much less repellent figure than popular superstition has made him", and goes to some lengths to stress his sociable, amusing, faithful and adventurous characteristics (Housman the pioneer aviator, the lover of good food and wine). But he can hardly avoid giving a fair hearing to Housman's unpleasantnesses, and they in turn can hardly

## Tragically tender

Neil Corcoran

JON STALLWORTHY (Editor)  
*The Complete Poems of Wilfred Owen*  
 Volume I: The Poems. 194pp.  
 Volume II: The Manuscripts. 560pp.  
 Chatto and Windus. £55 the set.  
 0701127155

Wilfred Owen saw only four of his poems into print. Texts of his work have, therefore, imposed a more than usual degree of responsibility on his editors. Jon Stallworthy's detective work on the watermarks of Owen's manuscripts and letters has demonstrated that earlier editors have made errors about the chronology of his poems and drafts; and his new edition gives us, for the first time, everything Owen wrote, in its proper sequence and its final form before abandonment. It also supplies a generous apparatus of criticism, modified in the case of the earlier work, but for all the 1914-18 poems recording all variants from the copy-text (except when a full transcript of the MS is provided), and occasionally reproducing manuscripts other than that of the copy-text. The two-volume format of the book allows poem, notes and manuscript to be consulted synoptically, and the chronological numbering of poems in sequence with fragments, despite their appearance in different volumes, allows easy cross-reference. It is a pity that the printing of some of the numerals themselves has gone a bit awry (21, 38, 74, 86 and 116 require attention for future editions), but in every other respect the edition is a triumph, nobly giving the lie to Owen's own definition of the "Motive" of "Miners": "How the Future will forget".

The finally established texts of the best-known poems are bound to seem uncomfortable for a while: "Hospital Barge", "Insenability", "A Sleep", "The Chances" and "The Sentry" all appear with significant variations from the received texts; and anyone familiar with "Futility", including anyone who knows it, set against the "Lacrimosa", as one of the most poignant moments of Britten's *War Requiem*, will find it hard to get used to those fields "half-sown" rather than "unsown". Less uncomfortable are the opportunities provided for watching Owen's greatest lines emerging from the mists of alternative decision and context: the personal longing of "Let me but sleep" transformed into the plangent mythologizing of "Let us sleep now", the sun "blessing all the field and air with gold" warping into the much stronger and stranger "Buttercups / Had blessed with gold their slow boots coming up"; and Bugles blued in "far citadels" in "The Little Mermaid", an early Keatsian version of Andersen, finally resolving into "And bugles calling for them from sad shores" in "Anthem for Doomed Youth".

Clearly, this major edition is likely to be followed gradually by considerable reinter-

pretation of Owen's career. Most immediately, it seems to me very powerfully to reinforce one's sense that the cliché of Owen criticism that the war "gave him his subject" must be modified once and for all. The war gave him more of his subject, which had been previously, and remained, his feelings about the bodies of young men. In some manuscripts there is touching evidence of his sexual confusions: he writes both "him" and "her", "boy" and "maid", "youths" and "girls", unsure in every case which to cancel. In many early poems, the erotic charge, both muffled and heightened by frustration, jolts through a catalogue of male attributes - curls, flanks, sides, knees, thighs, muscles, flesh, mouths. When he comes more fully to consciousness of his sexual nature, there are poems which select mythical characters and event for their erotic potential (Perseus, Hermes, Hercules wrestling with Antaeus), and poems which more straightforwardly rehearse homosexual themes, both as celebration and anxiety: "Page Eglantine", "The Rime of the Youthful Mariner", "Reunion", "Who is the god of Canongate?"

The poems of 1914-18, read in this full context, take on what one might think of, under the circumstances, as both a moral and aesthetic heroism. The erotic fantasizing - still, perhaps, the initial spur of the poems - is subordinated as only one element in a more complex responsiveness and responsibility. This happens outside the war poems when the great concluding line of "Maundy Thursday" - "I kissed the warm live hand that held the thing" - is distilled from alternatives which would have made the "live" hand "sweet" or "soft". "Live" has, in itself, a much more appropriately un-sentimental absoluteness, and it also ironically notices, unlike "sweet" and "soft", that the Christ two lines above is "thin, and cold, and very dead".

Within the war poems, this developing complexity can be observed at work everywhere, deepening erotic tenderness into tragic vision. An extraordinary instance of this is the way "Futility" embraces a revision of one of the recurring motifs of the poems: the boy-as-statue. This appears for the first time in "The Little Mermaid" - "Its cold face in vain / She gazed at, kissed and tried with sighs to thaw" - and, after acting in subsequent poems as the focus of much erotic reverie, it finally ghosts the lines which gaze on another body that will not thaw: "Are limbs, so dear achieved, are sides / Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?"

The consistency of Owen's primary subject, and his bravery in recording what he actually felt, make it possible for him, at such moments in his work, to handle with great dignity that profoundly perturbing emotion, an erotic tenderness for the dead. The sexual attraction operates as a difficulty subdued, and therefore, all the more subliminally compelling element of the "pity".

help dominating the picture. All too often Housman seems unduly waspish (in many of his dealings with fellow scholars), absurdly intolerant ("I am told that Americans are human beings, though appearances are against them"), self-centred (he was vitally flippant about the First World War) and fatuously exclusive (women, with a few notable exceptions, were hardly considered fit to be companions, students or even part of an audience: he told one correspondent - amazingly, an American - "My chief object in publishing my verses was to give pleasure to a few young men here and there." It is a remark which, while seeming to show modesty - "a few" - is in fact dismayingly proud of an offensive exclusivity in the poems.)

These blights are not so much sides to his personality as the front he showed the world, and they are as familiar as the general outline of his life: the happy childhood, the early death of his mother, the love for Moses Jackson at Oxford, the calamitous Finals, his decade in the Patent Office, and his eventual climb to fame as a scholar and poet. It is a story which seems to describe, in its essentials, a sustained and brilliantly successful attempt to recover from early disasters in love and exams, by exchanging the vicissitudes of an active private life for the rewards and security of being an unattached, unsmiling public man. The apparent search for emotional stability is matched, too, by a steadily articulated need for intellectual certainty.

As an undergraduate he championed the value of knowledge for its own sake, and by the end of his life he had produced a number of scholarly texts - notably the edition of Manilius - which are monuments to his quest for truth. His excellence as a textual critic embodies not simply a hunger for accuracy, but - as he said himself - "moral integrity". It is a quality which provides a necessary gloss to Auden's famous claim: "Deliberately he chose the dry-as-dust."

Housman's passion for "intellectual vigilance" is absolute and unambiguous, but its consequences for his poetry, as Page is well aware, are fascinatingly at odds with its effect on his prose. In prose his obsession is with the establishment of hard facts; in poetry his concern is for the authentic evocation of emotion - and since the emotion which was crucial to his imagination, homosexual love, could not be dealt with openly, he evolved a style which relies heavily on indirection, refraction and cryptic reference. It is, so to speak, a vitally creative inaccuracy: the very title of *A Shropshire Lad* invites us to contemplate a real place, but throughout the poems local details are almost wilfully bungled, and geography is persistently reorganized so as to create a landscape of the mind in which naturalistic details are loaded with metaphorical significance. Often, and most obviously, the intention is to create a series of signs which stand for

generalized feelings of loneliness and mortality. (These are reinforced by the easily apprehended associative values of the characters who appear in his poems: soldiers, exiles, rustic wanderers and outcasts.) But in many cases, the details embody precise personal references; a short lyric from *Last Poems*, "The fairies break their dances", is one of many which "glance" at Moses Jackson's long sojourn in India.

It is commonplace, now, to decode Housman's poems (and not only Housman's) with biographical help, and this Page does, in the consistently sensible analysis of the poems which occupies the final chapter of the book; and it is correspondingly difficult not to ask whether the process destroys an element of mystery which - unsolved - is central to their effect. Since it doesn't it seems less accurate to describe Housman as a habitually cryptic poet than as someone who enjoys playing fast and loose with the idea of secrecy. To give just one example: a large number of the poems invoke ballad or folk motifs (soldiers, lads and so on) not quite in order to take protective colouring from traditional connotations, but to register and exploit an apparently small but in fact tremendously resonant difference between such connotations and his own purposes:

The winds out of the west lands blow.  
 My friends have breathed them there;  
 Warm with the blood of lads I know  
 Comes east the sighing air.

This kind of subversion, as Page points out, has an interesting practical counterpart. During his lifetime, Housman only published poems which treat homosexuality obliquely, but among his papers at his death were several ("Oh who is that young sinner", "Ho, everyone who thirsteth" which are more or less completely unguarded. If Housman had wanted them destroyed, Page argues, he would hardly have appointed his brother Laurence as his executor. Laurence himself realized this and as Page writes: "the last thing Housman wanted was a too-scrupulous executor who would efficiently burn the indiscreet verses . . . Laurence could be relied on not to discharge his task too punctiliously."

One of the foremost features of Housman's poetry is a filiation with secrecy which amounts to a profound emotional truth. It is truth of a very different sort from that proposed and pursued by his prose, and it supplies a dimension to the poems which moderates the unalleviated pessimism that literary history has assured us is his predominant attitude. It is hard not to feel that Housman's pessimism, when the poems are read in bulk, seems too easily attained, and too axiomatically repeated, to be truly disconcerting. Their more rewarding subject, though harder to detect, is registered with something surprisingly like relish.

## For Conanaisseurs

Timothy d'Arch Smith

RICHARD LANCELYN GREEN and JOHN MICHAEL GIBSON  
*A Conan Doyle: A bibliography*  
 712pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £40.  
 019681906

This is a notable addition to the Soho Bibles, founded by Rupert Hart-Davis, and all the ingredients of a typical volume in that series are here; but whereas it used not to be considered relevant to include anything but bibliographical information, Richard Lancelyn Green and John Michael Gibson adorn their technical details with vivid informal summaries of the conception and contents of the books whose formats it is their duty to describe. This is both commendable and readable.

It is extraordinary how long Doyle has been bibliographically neglected. His various genres, Holmes of course, the historical romances, the war histories, the tub-thumping pamphlets, the spiritualistic crackpotteries, one would have thought long ago would have attracted bibliographers as they have collectors; but as Green and Gibson show in a useful appendix the first effort (in 1929) was of eighty-four pages; the last (in 1977) over forty pages shorter. To

disparise a full 712 pages may, therefore, appear uncharitable, but there are here serious lapses in bibliographical technique. The authors seem not to understand that the letters "J", "V" and "W" are conventionally not used (and never have been since the invention of movable types) for the signing of gatherings and thus (to take an instance) their formula for the first English edition of *Sir Nigel*, [A]6-1, K-U, X-Z, 2A-2C(6), is not only unnecessary but naive. Spurning the use of a superscript digit to denote the number of leaves to a gathering adds to the confusion and (to take the same instance) is no improvement on the simpler and unequivocal [A] B-2B<sup>4</sup> 2C<sup>6</sup>. It may be argued that collational statements for machine-printed books are superfluous but we are no more accurately served by the authors' paginations. To take *Sir Nigel* again, we are offered [I]I, [I]-[X], 1-396. From that we may infer that there are four preliminary unpaginated pages, afterwards that only pages i, x and 396 are unpaginated, but we are not paying £40 for inference and in any case we would be wrong. The correct statement is pp [4] (i-iv) v-x [x] 1-394 (395-396), a very different matter. Exception must be taken too to the use of a vertical rule in the title-page transcriptions to denote not only a line-ending but a space between those lines.



# Possessed by change

Gillian Beer

ROGER G. CHAPMAN and CLEVELAND T. DUVAL (Editors)  
Charles Darwin 1809-1882: A Centennial Commemorative  
376pp. Wellington, New Zealand: Nova Pacifica. £375.  
0908603 10 X

"Skimmed", "read thoroughly", "failed in reading": so Darwin annotated his reading-lists, occasionally adding judgments: "excellent", "intolerably prolix", "poor". All his categories would come in useful to a reader of this grandly produced commemorative of his first hundred years. The mausoleum-like weight of the physical book combines oddly with its topic, which is the celebration of a mind possessed by change and still capable of transforming others' theories. This volume is not to be moved, a stalwart, pseudo-Victorian object which resists transport, and demands wealth. It is in some measure at odds too with its contents, which are far less portentous than their format suggests. The essays are often properly provisional, written as part of discovery still in progress, rather than as summation. The deliberately punchy tone of James Moore's essay is iconoclastic, though the idol it topples is the set story of Darwin's reception, not Darwin's own work. Indeed, the tone of all the contributions is celebratory. Only Darwin's opponents come under attack, in Michael Ruse's racy and grotesquely pugnacious attack on the creationists, whose tone derives more from his courtroom appearance than from his philosopher's discrimination. R. J. Berry, in a temperately reductive discussion, denies the novelty of cladistics, seeing it primarily as an "attempt by professional systematists to improve their particular technology".

All the contributors write in an open style. They gloss technical terms where necessary, and assume an intelligent but not specialist reader. In this they concur with Darwin, one of whose enterprises was to "express the economic insights afforded when 'scientific and common language come into accordance'". His will to plainness can be seen, for example, in his 1855 gloss on the title of a reprint. The reprint was entitled "On the Power of Icebergs to Make Rectilinear, Uniformly-directed Grooves across a Submarine Undulating Surface". In Darwin's hand on the cover are the words "On Iceberg Scratching Rocks".

In his generously observed biographical account of Darwin's life, Redmond O'Hanlon emphasizes Darwin's "delighted absorption in the fine detail of the external world" which fuelled and controlled his extraordinary theorizing power. Darwin himself thought that scepticism was not a useful quality for a scientist: though it saved time, it stood in the way of experiment. Francis Darwin wrote of his father that "it was as though he were charged with theorizing power ready to flow into any channel on the slightest disturbance, so that no fact, however small, could avoid releasing a stream of theory." Perhaps it was this characteristic that Judd had in mind when he wrote that Darwin possessed "what I can only describe by the theological term 'faith' - the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". The intense interpenetration of fact and theory in his mind made of him an ecological, rather than a Pauline, scientist, although he loved exploration. "The mind is a place of delight", he wrote of his first sight of a tropical forest.

Yet he respected the need to categorize, as well as to inhabit, his observations. His profound debt to nineteenth-century individualism freed one of his most radical realizations, that divergence, not conformity, is the material of evolutionary change. The superabundance of individual forms is the precondition of selection. Just because of the intensity of individualism any "slight disturbance" is significant, and potentially both creative and threatening. So although O'Hanlon is undoubtedly right to emphasize that "Darwin's life was all of a piece", yet that completeness was sprung on contradictions.

Many of the contributors comment on the energetic delight that Darwin experienced in thinking and observing across very various

fields: geology, botany, what we now call biology, race theory, psychology, anthropology, and epistemology. Sandra Herbert vividly conveys the intellectual excitement and debate in which Darwin shared, in the Geological Society of the 1830s. Berry concludes his essay on "Darwin and Evolutionary Biology" by quoting the words from Proverbs sung at Darwin's funeral: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom." (By an absurd mischance of a kind that should not occur in book-production of these pretensions the quotation is attributed to "Berry 1982".)

Yet it would be a mistake if we came away with too euphoric a view of Darwin and the world he revealed. The pleasures of coming to know may be out of kilter with what is discovered. Two of the contributors cite Darwin's 1856 exclamation: "What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low, and horribly cruel works of nature!" Perhaps that was why he placed plants, as Mea Allen points out, so high in his order of things. *On the Movement and Habits of Climbing Plants* (1865) allows him to articulate the exact adaptation of climbers to their environments: "Darwin pointed out that climbers always inhabit hedges, thickets, and forests where competition for light and air is keenest. He did many experiments, and always failed to baffle his subjects." The elastic triumphs of the plants made it possible for him to write: "We thus see how perfect is the economy of nature." Darwin was exhilarated by the plants' need and determination, even while recognizing that such human description cannot enter very far into the language-free events of the physical order. At times he relished humorously the incongruence of observer, language, and event: "The movement of the shoot had a very odd appearance", he wrote, "as if it were disgusted with its failure but were resolved to try again." At other times, such human-directed language made him simply aware of the hopelessness of applying human standards, as when in *The Origin* he struggles with the problem of murderous mother bees.

Yet, though our judgments will not suffice in

understanding the organizations of the physical world, still as Howard Gruber and Robert Keegan point out in their excellent essay on "Darwin and the Human Sciences", Darwin insisted that "every aspect of organismic existence is subject to the same general laws of evolution. Not only the pseudopodia of an amoeba but also the human brain; not only the bee's instinctive comb-building behaviour but the composer's craft, the scientist's passion for truth - all are natural phenomena." And if that line of argument seems to beg the question of cultures and their determinants, the authors engage with the issue through their exploration of paired terms: sexuality and love, variation and individualism, struggle and progress - in which the second of each pair is the more clearly culturally focused. Their essay concludes with a powerful bringing-together of science and culture:

The evolutionary future of *Homo sapiens* will certainly be decided not by natural selection but by its by-products and aftermaths. If we do not succeed in inventing the peace, the choice of a few survivors will be at the crude whim of very high explosives, and not the outcome of that finely tuned interplay of organic forces that Darwin celebrated. . . . The abolition of nuclear weapons is now our most important evolutionary task.

That trenchant insight brings us as close to Darwin's thought as anything in the book. For Darwin in his time was chilled by the more distant prospect of the sun's cooling and the earth growing unfit to sustain life. He wrote in his *Autobiography*: "it is an intolerable thought that he (man) and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued slow progress."

What probably will draw most readers to the book, and what makes sense of its heavy form, making it less a tomb than a box of delights, is the splendid collection of illustrations, wittily and carefully chosen by the editors. All the figures connected with Darwin are here. There are several fine Conrad Marten pictures. There are illustrations ranging across several centuries. Occasionally, the "relevance" to evolutionary ideas seems comically forced by the

caption. A stunning illustration of a railway accident near Dawlish on the South Devon line, with towering cliffs, a lashing sea, and half the train presumably vanished beneath the waves, is captioned thus: "Perhaps by contemplating divine providence in the light of accidents such as this, Herbert Spencer discovered that he was not bound to his religious heritage." Perhaps. Perhaps not. But it is a disturbingly marvellous picture, with a set of iconographic problems of its own: the tiny, well-dressed passengers manhandling their luggage away in an ant-like trail, the infinitely stationary steam-train endlessly snapped in two by the counter-energy of the rushing water.

There is a great range of cartoons: One of them is of an ape-like Darwin being addressed by a fashionably expressionless lady of the 1870s. The caption reads: "THAT TROUBLES OUR MONKEY AGAIN. Female Descendant of Marine Ascidian! Really, Mr Darwin, say what you like about man; but I wish you would leave my emotions alone." The awkward fit of picture, caption, and implications, draws attention to an absence in the present collection. There is no extended discussion of the bearing of Darwinism on the position of women, though John Durant writes well on eugenics and Social Darwinism. The kinship metaphor, so crucial to Darwin's work, still takes here a patriarchal form, bringing to mind George Eliot's observation in her notebook after reviewing various kinship systems: "The modern position of woman chiefly determined by barbarian elements." *Mulier est finis familiae*. This seems to be one face of the joke in another 1870s cartoon, where a smooth wife resists a hirsute husband's reading that "baby is descended from a hairy quadruped": "Speak for yourself, Jack! I'm not descended from anything of the kind, I beg to say; and baby takes after me, so there."

Without quite falling into the trap of treating Darwin as God's new guise, the essays do succeed in demonstrating how his re-ordering of knowledge generated fresh kinships, kinships which continue to express themselves, and to change, in culture as well as genetics.

in the broadest sense, including the entire history of the subject. There is a trilogy on zebras, one on hyenas; one on angler-fishes, another on ichneumon flies, one on the boobies of the Galápagos. . . . there are thirty in all.

But the animals are all there to illustrate ideas. The ideas themselves are of wide interest, such as evolutionary progress, the morality of nature, the relation of chance and creativity, the relation of individual development and evolution. The section on the history of science is about ideas as well. It is actually entitled "personalities", but Darwin, Cuvier, Hutton, Agassiz, Vavilov, Steno, become, in Gould's hands, six more zoological specimens to illustrate such ideas as he can make them stand for.

Many of the essays popularize the very latest research. Inevitably, they cannot all be in fields that Gould himself researches in, but he has an excellent sense of proportion. There is none of that exaggerated enthusiasm for the unimportant and erroneous which makes too much "science journalism" hopelessly misleading. Only in two respects might a non-evolutionary biologist be misled. Gould too eagerly levels down an earlier generation of evolutionary biologists to a uniform orthodoxy, and scatters straw men among them who could never be found in the original literature. He scores, for example, frequent points against the theory that organisms are perfectly adapted. But the idea is obvious nonsense. No Darwinian has ever believed it.

The other trouble is that Gould too often asserts his opinions in such a way that they sound like facts. No one will be fooled by human rape is a social pathology rooted in power and powerlessness. . . . and even if they were I should not mind, but 'classical' Darwinian gradualism is now under attack in evolutionary circles" is actively misleading.

The essays on Teilhard and Piltown may be of most interest to readers of the TLS. Gould makes an absorbing, if not (I think) finally convincing, case that Teilhard de Char-

din was a conspirator, with Charles Dawson, in the Piltown affair. Teilhard was collaborating with Dawson at Piltown when the skull was discovered, and he was one of the team of three that continued the search afterwards: the other two were Dawson himself and Smith Woodward, of the Natural History Museum. "Since J. S. Weiner's elegant case [Gould states] virtually precludes Dawson's innocence (*The Piltown Forgery*, 1955), conspiracies become the only reasonable refuge for challengers." He is satisfied of Smith Woodward's innocence, but not of Teilhard's.

The geographical and temporal fit has always been known. Gould adds two main arguments: a tendentious interpretation of some previously little-known correspondence between Teilhard and Kenneth Oakley, who was one of the three main original exponents of the hoax, and (secondly) Teilhard's curious reliance about the Piltown skull in his published writings. Readers may judge for themselves, but Teilhard's slip in a letter looks to me as much like the lapsed memory of an old man as like an attempt at concealment; and the fact that he said so little about the skull suggests I think as much that he had his suspicions, as that he helped in the fraud. Gould was copiously criticized for his original article, and includes a specially written "reply to critics" in this volume. But, in the end, the facts that he and his critics discuss are indecisive.

Gould tells us that "several of the men I most admire suspected Teilhard"; but "not so much on the basis of hard evidence . . . [as] from an intuitive feeling about this man". But Gould does not consider this kind of evidence at all. I only wish he had. Stripped of psychology, the facts of time and place are not convincing; whether, if that defect were supplied, they would become so is another matter. Many masterpieces of literary detection have, when the "hard evidence" has been assembled, been made finally convincing by the evidence of personality. I should like to know more of what those admirable men thought.

# From inspiration to interpretation

Richard Osborne

JAMES A. HEPOKOSKI  
Giuseppe Verdi: *Falstaff*  
181pp. Cambridge University Press. £10.95  
(paperback £4.95).  
0521 235340

Cambridge Opera Handbooks seem intent on addressing what they suppose to be a number of mutually exclusive audiences: "the serious opera-goer or record-collector as well as the student or scholar". Such a wide brief to individual contributors has produced, to date, an uneven series and the present volume on *Falstaff* also suffers from the series editor's attempt to turn the excellent James A. Hepokoski into an all-purpose cultural panjandrum. The strengths of the book - strengths which make it a valuable postscript to such major offerings as Frank Walker's chapters in *The Man Verdi* and Julian Budden's chapter in *The Operas of Verdi 3* - rest in Professor Hepokoski's fresh and lively accounts of the shaping of the libretto and the music (Chapters 2 and 3), the further refinements, post-Milan 1893, of the Rome and Paris versions (Chapter 4), and a pointed and informative short essay in Chapter 5 on the harmonic practices in *Falstaff*, a subject rather diffusely treated by Budden. By contrast, the synopsis seems redundant in so

generally learned a context, while the three chapters on stage history and interpretation are a good deal weaker.

The book shows how much remains to be gleaned from extant *Falstaff* materials, providing us with partial compensation for the lack of important drafts and sketches and the absence of the potentially invaluable production book. In his chapter, "The forging of the libretto", Hepokoski gives us an unusually full check-list of the borrowings from the two *Henry IV* plays, and from Boccaccio; though it hardly needs a deferential nod towards an article in the *Music-al Quarterly* in 1972 to establish the further link with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. What's more, by pointing to the virtuoso skills of Boito's libretto - the Falstaff-Alice duet in II.ii, for example, where the verses rhyme whether written out in alternating seven and eleven-syllable lines, or in nine-syllable lines, or in five-syllable lines - Hepokoski underlines the work's remarkable craftsmanship, and its independence from the obscurities and banalities of the fashionable art of the time, both "progressive" and "verismo". In his chapter on the composition of the opera, Hepokoski provides many instances of Verdi's working and reworking of the score. As he observes, *Falstaff* was written over a period of three years in brief, intense spurts of creativity: "Verdi has considered or rethought almost every phrase of the opera dozens of times. *Falstaff* was created

in sudden flashes of inspiration followed by agonising doubts and struggles, ultimately resolved by sudden inspiration again."

Apity, Hepokoski's remarks on Verdi's harmonic procedures are as succinct and illuminating as the music itself. On the other hand, the bar-by-bar dismembering of II.i, the unforgettable scene between Falstaff and Ford *alias* Signor Fontana, is one of those show-stopping academic routines which appear to be obligatory for musicologists these days. Hepokoski is too alert to the theatrical brilliance of *Falstaff* not to come up with some valuable asides, but to analyse the scene in "purely musical" terms, to talk of Ford "wheeling Falstaff from his F area through an E area and into the region of E flat" is to land us back into a world where Hamlet begins his famous exordium in the infinitive. Not only do we miss most of the jokes in such an analysis (these procedures are pre-vailing solemn), we also lose touch with the words as prosody, as gesture, or as a comic medium in themselves. This is frustrating when elsewhere in the book we are reminded of Verdi's own overwhelming preoccupation with the text: his obsession with verbal clarity and his hatred of singers who "fall asleep on the notes".

As to the interpreters, it's useful to be reminded how grotesque were the liberties which the first Falstaff, Victor Maurel, was to take with the role. (The extraordinary 1907 recording of "Quand'ero paggio" is as nothing beside his decision to cut his monologue at the start of III.i in some performances.) Elsewhere, Hepokoski's stage history is sketchy. His remark on this "wise comedy of Verdi's old age" interestingly predicts the recent Giulini performance, sober and searching, which came too late for inclusion in the survey; but it's odd to have Stabile so inadequately mentioned and to find no reference at all in the main text to Tito Gobbi, the greatest of all the post-war Falstaffs. This latter part of the book is much less good. The chapter on critical assessments of *Falstaff*, intended presumably to read like a good Casebook preface, is oddly indiscrimin-

the advantage of experience and the patronage of the old Knickerbocker aristocracy, but the auditorium of the opera house he leased, the Academy of Music, lacked any vacant boxes to which the socially ambitious new families could subscribe. After Patti decided that she had had enough of America and returned to her Welsh country house, Mapleson had lost his trump card.

Even then he might still have won his war with the Met and established himself as the dominant operatic presence in New York; had he not misjudged two factors. First, he failed to find adequate substitutes for Patti and Gerster, fixing his hopes on native American prima donnas such as Emma Nevada and Minnie Hauk who quite failed to produce the necessary glamour or vocal distinction. Second, his attitude to the arrival of German opera in New York was suicidally short-sighted. New York had recently been flooded with German immigrants making up a huge potential audience, and for its second season the Met shareholders cannily took the Met away from an Italian opera impresario and handed it to a régime which brought in singers and conductors trained at Bayreuth. The subsequent rise in standards of ensemble, production and overall musical preparation led to performances more comparable more effective than anything ever heard in Italian opera and exposed the shoddiness which pervaded Mapleson's company. The novelty of Wagnerian enchanted fashionable New York and put the seal on the Met's status. Mapleson simply refused to listen as his receipts dropped, babbling on about "discordant rumpuses which make even a dumb animal whine and curl about". Mapleson may have been unlucky with his financial backers - the board of the Academy of Music had consistently failed to give him the sort of guarantees or advances he needed - but he was ultimately defeated by his archaic musical taste. "Now what is the effect of pure Italian opera?" he asked rhetorically. "It just makes everyone happy."

When Mapleson came to write his memoirs he blatantly attempted revenge on Patti for the trouble her whims of iron had caused him, and Cone uncritically relates his scurrilous version of her rivalry with Etelka Oberst, another prima donna of the company who ended up being treated by Charcot for hysteria. Mapleson's bitterness stemmed from the fact that he needed Patti a lot more than she needed him; plenty of impresarios would have paid her whatever she demanded, and she saw no parallel reason to sing unless she felt like doing so. But Mapleson could not afford to lose a single point for he was in cut-throat competition with the Metropolitan Opera, a new house whose shareholders included the Morgan, Rockefeller and Vanderbilt clans and which was offering a similar repertory. Mapleson had

## Fit for the turntable

Michael Tanner

ALAN BLYTH (Editor)  
Opera on Record, 2  
Discographies compiled by Malcolm Walker  
399pp. Hutchinson. £15.  
009 1531209

Like its predecessor, this book contains essays by writers of several species - record-hacks, serious critics and even a notable composer - on operas popular or important enough to be represented wholly and/or in part on record. It is designed to appeal both to listeners in search of a best buy and to fellow-connoisseurs who will no doubt often be enraged to that extraordinary extent characteristic of opera-buffs. The first volume dealt with most of the greatest works, so this one is naturally less interesting overall. But it offers much that is helpful and interesting; there are more chapters here devoted to the whole operatic oeuvre of composers who don't get a lot of gramophonic attention: Handel, Gluck (except for *Orfeo*, treated in the first volume), Berlioz, Janáček, Stravinsky and Schoenberg, and some which polish off a couple of operas by the same composer.

As before, the standard of contributions fluctuates sharply. The first three chapters, on *Dido and Aeneas*, Handel and Gluck are exemplary and authoritative, though if one's appetite for Handel is moderate, Stanley Sadie won't increase it. Max Loppert rightly deplores the under-representation of Gluck, the absence of a complete recording of *Iphigénie en Tauride* being probably the catalogue's most reprehensible gap. David Cairns, writing superbly as always, is impressive on Berlioz, in particular *La Damnation de Faust*; if, even so, his contribution isn't quite all it might have been, that is perhaps because of his involvement in the complete Colin Davis cycle. *Les Troyens* still awaits, it seems to me, a recording which does it full justice; no great Cassandra or Dido has recorded these roles complete. Cairns should clearly have been forced at pistol-point

into performing them. At least Cairns's enthusiasm for the works is undisguised and infectious, which should be a *sine qua non* for contributing. By contrast David Hamilton, the (usually) first-rate New York critic, can hardly find a good word to say for *Adriana Lecouvreur*, which makes his piece dispiriting reading, all the more so for its exhaustive scholarship, puzzling in the circumstances. Rodney Milnes provides the needed alternative, writing with his typical witty fervour about *Thais*, so that many readers will no doubt feel impelled to go and buy a recording - only to find that there isn't one in the catalogue. I'd have thought - but perhaps the next volume will deal with this complaint - that Massenet was a fit subject for an omnium gATHERUM chapter, the inevitable *Manon* and *Werther* apart. Michael Kennedy is properly enthusiastic about Janáček, though confidence is a little undermined by his getting the crucial moment in the plot of *The Cunning Little Vixen* wrong (see page 336).

The least and most satisfactory chapters respectively are on Schoenberg and Berg. On the former, Peter Stadlen manifests no enthusiasm or understanding, and is content to name-drop irrelevantly, and carry on in this mode: "a single wrong note on the Scherchen record corresponds to batches of respectively sixteen and seven wrong notes under Craft. In addition, there are another sixteen slips under Scherchen and forty-two under Craft. . . . If ever encouragement was required, it's to get people to listen to Schoenberg's marvellous stage works again, provided they can find copies of them. They won't want to if they read Stadlen; perhaps that was his idea."

The volume ends on a level which, in an ideal world, it would have maintained throughout: Robin Holloway is eloquent, searching, on *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*, and above all his assessments recordings in the light of his view of the works. I hope he is given more to do in Volume 3, where such neglected works as *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (not neglected, at any rate, on record), as well as such masterpieces as *Palesrine* and *Doktor Faust* ought to find a place.

JP 21/10/84



# Horribly unnatural

Mark Griffith

R. P. WINNINGTON-INGRAM  
Studies in Aeschylus  
225pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£25 (paperback, £9.95).  
0521 249384

Perhaps the best in a strong field of general books on Sophocles is R. P. Winnington-Ingram's *Sophocles: an Interpretation*, which appeared in 1980. The Professor of Greek (now Emeritus) at the University of London had already made his mark over fifty years as a critic of Greek tragedy, with *Euripides and Dionysus* (1947) and numerous articles on Aeschylus and Sophocles (to say nothing of his major contributions to the understanding of Greek music). "From the quiet seclusion of the metropolis", with his rare combination of erudition and literary sensitivity, he has managed to assimilate the best of such grand figures of classical scholarship as Eduard Fraenkel, Denys Page, H. D. F. Kitto and George Thomson, while avoiding the dogmatism and myopia to which each of those – like most "grand figures" – has been liable. Professor Winnington-Ingram is no lightweight: but he does have a delightfully light touch; and in his modest and disarming way, he always provokes thought, often surprise, rarely serious disagreement.

*Studies in Aeschylus* has different aims from the *Sophocles* book, though the two complement each other well, and the design of the dust-covers suggests that they are companion volumes. This book is shorter, and consists for the most part of previously published articles, some rewritten, some not. But it is much more than a mere collection of *kleine Schriften*. All seven plays are discussed, and a coherent and comprehensive picture of Aeschylean tragedy emerges. The style is clear and engaging; problems and scholarly disagreements are honestly faced, but technical discussions of points of Greek are relegated to footnotes and appendices; so the main threads of argument never get lost in the web of complexities for which the text of Aeschylus is notorious, and the book is accessible even to non-classicists.

First, then, and perhaps foremost, these *Studies* can be highly recommended as a learned, sober and spirited introduction to Aeschylus – safe for the young and inexperienced, but still stimulating and enjoyable for veterans too. References and bibliography are mostly up-to-date and full, though American scholarship is rather neglected in favour of British or German. The magisterial chapter on *Seven against Thebes* is perhaps the finest available discussion of that play, careful, subtle, and imaginative. The two chapters on the other incomplete tragedies (*Suppliants*, *Prometheus*) are shorter and less exciting; but both are models of good sense; in each case, the main issues of the surviving play are clearly laid out, and from there inference and speculation are tactfully employed in the attempt to outline how these issues are resolved in the sequels. (Winnington-Ingram accepts, though with hesitation, the authenticity of *Prometheus*, and places it first in its trilogy.) The brief chapter on "Zeus in *Perseus*" is the least comprehensive: to Winnington-Ingram the play "lacks subtlety", and although he dutifully points out significant connections with later plays of Aeschylus' full maturity, he does not pursue them with the same enthusiasm.

Four substantial chapters, separate but overlapping, are devoted to *The Oresteia* (a fuller look might have helped readers wishing to dip back into them later): "Agamemnon and the Trojan War" (largely new); "Clytemnestra and the voice of Athena" (a classic article from 1949); "Orestes and Apollo"; and "Zeus and the Erinyes" (revised and expanded from articles of 1933 and 1954 respectively); and finally there comes a short Appendix on particular details of text and interpretation.

The most distinctive feature of Winnington-Ingram's reading of Aeschylus is his emphasis on both the intellectual and moral content of the plays ("Aeschylus was a dramatist of ideas – of religious ideas"), and on the individual characters and their motivations. He is certainly not one to deny the "Dionysian" element (music, rhythm, violence, sex, anarchy) in tragedy; but his view is in the end more "Apollian". This comes out in his suspicion

unusual in a modern critic, of ambiguity and multiple meaning ("Polysemic" interpretation may be all very well in certain fields of criticism, but in the case of the Greek tragedians... it may be little better than evasion of choice"); "ambiguity is the last refuge of the indecisive critic". But it would be wrong to conclude from these remarks that he is impatient or simple-minded in his critical approach: his Aeschylus is still allowed to be saying and doing several things at the same time; but he insists that Aeschylus himself *thought* about, and through, the problems that he poses, and that we too are not meant to lose ourselves in their fascinating complexity.

Winnington-Ingram is among those critics who see Aeschylus growing in moral and intellectual power throughout his life: *Persians*, even *Seven*, are still only preludes to the great justifications of divine violence and human suffering that we find in the *Suppliants* trilogy and *Oresteia* (and probably *Prometheus* trilogy too). Others may find it hard to see the stupendous and shattering *Seven* as a stepping-stone to any higher stage; rather it may represent an alternative vision, equally satisfying. But in any case it is to Winnington-Ingram's credit that he does not distort his analysis of *Seven* by inappropriate comparisons with the later trilogies. Each speaks for itself.

More problematical is his determination to probe beneath the surface of Aeschylus' characters, and explore their feelings and reasons for committing the appalling crimes that they choose. As ever, he is honest in warning the reader that his approach is a little more "psychological" than is fashionable. In his *Sophocles* book he wrote: "In the case of Aeschylus perhaps we do not go much farther than to say that he has provided that minimal degree of character and motivation which is required to account for the action" (similarly here, pages 96, 106, 133); but of course it all depends how much is required, and by whom. Homer gives his audience well-rounded characters; but the narrative of Hesiod or choral lyric offers only the barest sketch of god or hero. (In general, in contrast to his *Sophocles*, where he constantly reminds us of the towering figure of Aeschylus in the background, Winnington-Ingram takes little account in this book of Aeschylus' predecessors and contemporaries. What of Homer's gods, surely relevant to the squabbling figures of *Eumenides*? What of Stesichorus? He looks long and hard at Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, almost as one might look at Euripides' Jason and Medea. What he finds is fascinating and suggestive: if it will not convince all, it will certainly not mislead or distract them as so many attempts at psychology in drama do. "Agamemnon's emotions, in the end, lent their own force to the blasts of fortune" (on Ag 219): a military man in a shame culture, he desired glory more than he respected his daughter's life, his wife's feelings, his neighbours' opinion. Clytemnestra, with her "heart of manly counsel" (Ag 11), "hated Agamemnon, not simply because he had killed her child, not because she loved Aegisthus, but out of jealousy, that was not jealousy of Chryseis or Cassandra, but of Agamemnon himself and his status as a man". In this brilliant chapter (argued with far greater tact and subtlety than I can illustrate here) Winnington-Ingram points out how "Athena is the counterpart of Clytemnestra... For Athena fights like a man... She is god-goddess to Clytemnestra's man-woman, and her masculinity wins her praise and worship, while that of Clytemnestra leads to disaster. Everything... that Clytemnestra's nature demanded and her sex forbade or hampered, Athena is free to do."

If psychologizing is out of fashion, discussion of sex roles and of schizophrenic societies is not (and in 1949 was rather ahead of its time). Some of us may not be drawn to look so deeply into Clytemnestra's inner feelings. We may not see in *Perseus* such a pointed contrast as Winnington-Ingram between the moral character of Demeter on the one hand, Kerkiras and the chorus on the other. We cannot help but be impressed by his analysis of *Seven* 743-57, in which he refers back to Eteocles' and Polydorus' (181-202, and comes up with the attractive suggestion that, earlier in the trilogy, Aeschylus depicted Jocasta as a proud and maternal woman playing a maternal role

(here especially reference to the new Stesichorus would have been useful); but we may not all go so far with him as to ask, "If Jocasta over-persuaded Laius to beget a son in defiance of the oracle, what was her motive?"

But this is a matter of degree, not principle. Aeschylus' characters, flesh and blood behind their masks, do intentionally commit unnatural and revolting acts. His men and women (and male and female gods) clash in wild and horrendous oppositions (forty-nine husbands murdered in one trilogy; daughter, husband, mistress, mother, in another: all this the will of Zeus?). Many critics, in emphasizing Aeschylus' concern for moral and social progress, read the late plays as optimistic, almost smug, solutions to the problems they confront (as if Apollo won his case in *Eumenides*, with the jurors or with us); others see all his plays as truly tragic in their depiction of inevitable suffering, with *Eumenides* no more than a marvellous conjuring-trick resolving all, solving nothing. This book has the rare sophistication and humanity to give us both views in one, an Aeschylus who expects us to look, and think, without necessarily being entirely comforted by what we see.

## Presumptuously cunning

Jasper Griffin

JENNY STRAUSS CLAY  
The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey  
268pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£23.90.  
0691 065748

Modern study of Homer began with Wolf's *Prolegomena* in 1795. The dormant energies of Germany were being unleashed, both in politics and scholarship. The Napoleonic harrow passed over Germany; the great German scholars fought campaign after campaign over the Homeric poems. But while Germany attained unity, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were fragmented, reorganized into "layers" like the Nibelungenlied, truncated by ruthless excisions, translated into imaginary earlier forms and dialects, divided up among different poets (some of them "botchers" and "hacks").

By 1930 disillusion was widespread, as Homerists contemplated the lack of agreed results after generations of hard fighting. The world was ready for the formulaic theory of Milman Parry and an end to the exploiting of every inconcinnity in the poems as a lever to split them between separate poets. But inconsistencies still attracted scholars; only now they were not ascribed to different poets (let alone botchers and hacks – such terms had vanished from respectable society) but to different layers of the tradition. As Jenny Strauss Clay nicely puts it, "Plus ça change... The harsh remedies of the Analysts are replaced by the diluted medicine of the neo-Analysts, but the outcome remains the same: the unity of the poem dies at the hands of the doctors." So it is not surprising that much recent work on Homer has tended to accept everything, to smooth over all the contradictions alleged by earlier generations and to argue that the poems are not inconsistent but complex; nor that some scholars are now finding in the epic meanings of great subtlety which have been undetected for three millennia.

The *Wrath of Athena* is in this tradition, proclaiming kinship with G. Nagy's controversial *The Best of the Achaeans*. Its central thesis is that "wrath forms the crucial area" not only of the *Iliad* but also of the *Odyssey*: Odysseus is himself a man of wrath, whose name means "a curse"; and who inflicts and incurs suffering. Above all he has incurred the wrath of Athena, who abandons him to the perils of his wanderings, and who must renounce her anger before helping him to overcome his dangers at home in Ithaca. That wrath is "a key to the structure of the entire *Odyssey*". Illuminating the relationship of man and gods in general, the obvious difficulty is that this long poem says so very little that can be taken as referring to Athena's anger with the hero. Professor Clay must admit that "the anger of Athena against Odysseus is only alluded to sparingly in the poem". In fact it is a question whether it is mentioned at all, and ingenious argument is



One of the heads of the triple-bodied monster in the Akropolis Museum, Athens, reproduced from Ancient Greek Art and Iconography, edited by Warren G. Moon (346pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £47.50. 0 299 09250 X).

necessary to find a single "explicit" passage. That is in Book Five: Hermes says that after the Sack of Troy the Achaeans offended Athena during their return home, "And she raised against them a stormy wind and great waves. Then all Odysseus' companions perished...". Scholars both ancient and modern have deleted the puzzling lines, while J. B. Hainsworth says, "Hermes is speaking generally, not to say vaguely." All the other allusions to Athena's wrath speak of it as being caused by blasphemous actions committed in the sack of Troy itself, and as being directed at the Achaeans in general.

The next obvious question to ask is why the goddess was so angry with her favourite hero. The answer is that "to put it simply, if not too crudely, *Odysseus* is too clever; his intelligence calls into question the superiority of the gods themselves" (author's italics). This will fit with the second argument which the book develops with great skill and eloquence: that the *Odyssey* as a whole is about the superiority of cunning and resourcefulness to violence and physical strength. True and vital as that lesson is, the author argues, the master of such mental heroism provokes Athena, the most cunning and resourceful of the gods, who punishes him for his presumption by leaving him to face dangers alone. Even if we accept that Hermes' words refer to Odysseus and not to the rest of the Achaeans, it is surely hard to see why the poet should have said that "the Achaeans committed an offence during their return home", if what he meant to convey was that Odysseus offended by his general character, what Clay elsewhere calls his "mode of existence". What happened "on the way home" to make that intolerable to the goddess?

It is an incidental awkwardness that the tradition did indeed know of tricky actions by Odysseus which might have aroused the goddess's severe displeasure. Early epics told of him murdering the clever Palamedes and carrying off the Palladium, Athena's own image. But Homer never mentions any of that; for Clay "Homer's silence is more than surprising". And she must also argue that the poem begins at the moment when the goddess ceases her wrath: for in the opening scene we find her appealing for Odysseus to Father Zeus and setting off herself to work for his return. Only in Book Thirteen is there a scene in which Clay thinks the anger of the goddess is discernible beneath the urbane surface of a "duel of wits" between Odysseus and Athena. The discussion of that scene is subtle and witty, but at least one reader was not convinced of the reality of the underlying motif.

The book is well constructed and well written. It contains a very good account of the Homeric gods and their attitude to men, which combines contemptuous serenity with a sort of mutual need. The concluding chapter, about the way in which a man can live in the world of such gods, is eloquent and suggestive. It is the wrath of Athena and its implications which many readers will find hard to accept.

## Picturing the details

Richard Brown

JAMES JOYCE  
Giacomo Joyce  
With an Introduction and Notes by Richard Ellmann  
37pp. Faber. Paperback, £1.  
0571 131646  
The Dead  
Illustrated by Pietro Annigoni  
75pp. Kulgin D. Duval and Colin H. Hamilton.  
French, Foss, Pitlochry, Perthshire. PH16  
SNG. £165.  
Flannegans Wake: Chapter One –  
The Illness-straitened Colossick Edition by Tim Ahern  
96pp. University of Washington Press. £6.40.  
0295 95991 6

Giacomo Joyce looks well in its new appearance as a slim paperback volume. Such a format seems to release it from the suggestion that it is a rejected, insubstantial piece, interesting only to scholars as the record of an ill-advised adulterous flirtation, or as a commonplace book from which the best phrases were taken for the major works. Though there is no external evidence that Joyce would have approved of such a thing, this slender and inviting package promises the same kind of pleasures that may be offered by a book of verse.

As with much Joyce, the key to its enjoyment is not abstruse interpretation so much as a profound sense of physical and verbal eroticism. The series of some fifty brief observations and exclamations – some no more than a single sentence, others comprising fully-realized scenes – draws on incidents that took place in Joyce's early thirties in Trieste, when he conceived an admiration for a female student whom Richard Ellmann identifies in his excellent introduction as Amalia Popper. Uncharacteristically, Joyce kept structural and narrative devices to a minimum and concentrated his artistry on communicating emotion through visual description and dark, suggestive allusion. His sexual curiosity is here applied not to the crudeness of consummation but to the delicious uncertainty of anticipation and unfulfilled desire.

This is Joycean language in a volatile and transitional stage; its stylistic flavour is closest to Stephen's lyric and esoteric mental drapery, as laid out in the "Proteus" episode of *Ulysses*, and its subject-matter to the claustrophobic erotic confessionals of *Exiles*. It is a unique combination of rhythmically languid and brightly observant descriptions, myopically close, worked-over to a high pitch of metaphorical intensity. Joyce adds intimacy and piquancy to his perceptions by introducing an element of indecorousness or grotesquerie. He observes, for example, not only the shadows falling on the girl's face but the "randy yellow humour lurking within the softened pulp of her eyes". Another favourite device is that of observation followed by analogy. White lace is "a flake, a snowflake"; red lips are "dark-blooded molluscs". Visual puns are common enough here to turn a Marlow poem towards Venus. The long, black piano is a "coffin of music": a luxuriously morbid image here but one whose redeeming comic potential was exploited in the "Circe" episode of *Ulysses*, where Joyce has Father Dolan resurrected from the coffin of the brothel pianola. *Giacomo Joyce* is an implored galaxy of Joycean impressions, and new readers who develop an appetite for it may find even more connections with the other works than has Ellmann in his full, instructive notes. But tying it to the other works is only part of the pleasure. The mannered urgency of the piece gives it its own quality of attractive strangeness.

Another familiar pretext for the republication of a great author is an illustrated edition, and Joyce's work poses especially interesting problems for the illustrator. You can smell the luminousness of one recent publication – bound in green morocco and printed on hand-made Italian paper – as it slips from its presentation case. This is a limited edition of "The Dead", illustrated by Pietro Annigoni. Annigoni is not a prolific illustrator but has previously done etchings for Gogol's story "Overcoat", which shares a turn-of-the-century setting and a petit-bourgeois cast with Joyce's

story.

There are four etchings for "The Dead", acknowledging its four-part structure, and gaining, like the story, in seriousness and in affective sympathy as they progress. The first gives Gabriel Conroy and the drunken Freddy Malins at the Misses Morkan's New Year Dance. The second captures Gabriel as he delivers his self-important after-dinner speech. Joyce describes Gabriel with "his ten trembling fingers on the tablecloth" while the piano plays a waltz in the next room. Annigoni's plump figure hangs his fingers pianistically in front of him as he rises to speak. In the third picture the frail figure of Michael Furey cowers in deep shadow beside the garden wall. As Gretta imagines him in the story, he is here a figure of great pathos with intense, staring eyes. Finally Gabriel, rather priestlike, leans tenderly and sympathetically over the sleeping Gretta, whose features are fresh and girlish yet harbour a hint of menace, the trace of her past.



One of Pietro Annigoni's etchings for "The Dead", from the book reviewed here.

In style the pictures seem subtly to exploit both the dense cross-hatching of a Cruikshank or a Doré and the freely drawn outlines of a modern like Matisse. But their manner is discreet. Academic Joyceans with an overweening sense of Joyce's "non-referential" linguistic complexity, if they take the trouble to revisit the text in the light of these illustrations, may well be surprised by the precise, highly-worked visual details that Joyce included and upon which a careful and intelligent illustrator such as Annigoni can draw.

Illustration, like translation, implies an extractable or at least perceivable community of sense or referents to which both verbal and visual signs may point. The illustrator faces the challenge of providing an image that is both coherent and convincing in itself, and a convincing impression of the literary text. In the case of a text like "The Dead", which deliberately attempts the verbal depiction of visual scenes, the visual translator has a hard enough dual task, but how much more complex is that task when faced with the work of the later Joyce, which seems to set out to disrupt the very capacity of language to achieve such visual depiction.

What, for example, can be done with *Flannegans Wake*? Tim Ahern's "Illness-straitened Colossick Edition" of the first chapter is informal, light-hearted, rather scruffy at first sight, and takes its inspiration from the work of popular cartoonists more than from the artistic tradition. Ahern is not self-conscious about style and has a go at content: it is hard not to be converted by the sheer sense of humour in his *Wake* figures and images as they appear between or beside the lines of a hand-written reproduction of Joyce's text. Joyce's words are released from the inhibiting impossibility that they will ever yield a complete or unchallenged version of their meaning. Ahern gives them back some of their exuberance, absurdity, novelty and life. At this level, as we are told in the introduction, "a child afoot could understand it" and, since Joyce committed himself to write in this way, Ahern says there is "only one conclusion: to draw".

## A master's more of less

Valentine Cunningham

SAMUEL BECKETT  
Worstward Ho  
47pp. John Calder. £5.50.  
07145 39790  
Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment  
Edited by Ruby Cohn  
178pp. John Calder. £8.95.  
07145 39740  
A Samuel Beckett Reader  
Edited by John Calder  
281pp. Pan Books: Picador. Paperback, £3.50.  
0330 380090

Who reads Beckett? As opposed, that is, to watching his stuff on stage or on television. One doubts if they are all that many. (Two of these books, for instance, are propped up on Arts Council subsidies.) But publishers appear to believe in the persistence of readerly interest, and in its variety; so that Beckett is made available, and to an extent surely unique among living authors, for communion – oecumenically, as it were – in a most interesting variety of kinds.

*Worstward Ho*, resilient growing tip of an oeuvre whose hardy begotter will be seventy-eight this year, is for the steady customers, whoever they are, the people waiting, one imagines not unkeenly, to pick up where the last published text of the master, *Ill Seen, Ill Said*, left them. For its part, *Disjecta* will doubtless interest some of these, though probably not all of them. It consists of old and arcane things, dusted off essays and reviews, pieces on other writers and on painters, a tiny clutch of letters, fragments of Beckett's first novel, a bit of an unfinished play. Some of these are already in print – though often in the remotest corners of the available Beckettiana; some have never been published before. They come mainly in three out of Beckett's five or so languages, with some of the German translated into English, but none of the French. Beckett "belittles" these materials, but since they're for "scholars", who're supposed to be eager for anything and everything Beckett might disject their way, the author in his undoubted kindness hasn't impeded the "scholarly" efforts of Ruby Cohn. These "scholars", it can be assumed, however, won't be spending much time on John Calder's second, updated selection from the oeuvre. Even the most haphazard "scholar" will have all the Calder extracts on the shelf already.

The Beckett thus available, though, is not quite the same animal on each of these occasions. At least, Cohn's differs rather sharply from Calder's. So much so that one is driven to wonder which midwife's Beckett is better, or at least which one is bringing forth, so to say, Beckett's Beckett. At first glance, of course, Beckett gives lots of signals that he's Calder's rather than Cohn's man. He frequently professes impatience with professional readers. In answer to their letters he tells them he does not relish exegesis and the hunt for overtones. "I don't have any thoughts about my work." The reviews Ruby Cohn has gathered abuse the professors with a fine and sustained contempt. They "exhaust the inessential"; turn Mozart into "a compound of Harold Skimpole and Wagner in half-hose"; wrench Proust's fiction into "Uniformity, homogeneity, cohesion"; mistranslate Rilke; get between Dante and the light of intelligence. "We want to READ

Dante", Beckett announces, glibly at a Dante commentator, and sticking up once more, it might seem, for ordinary readers and readings. But then you reflect that he did license Professor Cohn's volume. And, after all, he is a sort of commentator on Dante himself; the Cohn gathering includes his "Dante... Bruno. Vico... Joyce" essay. That wish just to read Dante doesn't last long. And in fact Beckett goes on to say that he'd hate to end up doing anything as common-readably as reduce Dante "to lovable proportions". "Who wants to love Dante?"

John Calder does want people to like and even love Beckett. This publishing-editing midwife's "maieutic saws" (to borrow a phrase from *Murphy*) are commonly about how "rewarding and pleasurable" Beckett is. In his general introduction and in introductory explanations of his selected passages, Calder's (often apt) litanies of the modern horrors behind Beckett's angst and his (often persuasive) allusions to other worried artistic sensibilities get to sound, familiar as they are, rather acceptable, even warming. In Calder's presentation, camps and atom-bombs shed their awfulness, Sartre, Goethe and Beethoven become softened, and they and Beckett get anesthetized, docketed, stowed away, and in general recuperated for readers in armchairs and school libraries. Calder's maieutic saws just aren't sore enough. They are too often truisms cohabiting with genteel chat.

Beckett himself, in a marvellously biting piece dug out by Ruby Cohn, praised Ezra Pound for his "Spartan maieutics". What is most striking about this old-young Beckett is the raw aggression of its theory and practice. *Disjecta* – Beckett's own title – are in a simple sense things that have been dispersed, scattered. They're also, though, things that have been dashed to pieces, brought to naught, frustrated, even squandered. So while *Disjecta* denotes the glum deprecations of time it also declares an aesthetic that wills the destruction of old forms and chooses to live with the consequent chaos.

This Beckett is the ally of revolutionary aesthetician Eugène Iolas, in the pages of whose magazine *transition* the Dante, Bruno, Vico, Joyce appeared. He warns to his own "foul fist", and likes *Endgame*'s power to "claw" and "hook" audiences. He wants to rip up the veil of speech, to bore holes through language, to assault the word. "Ein Wörterstürmer! Im Namen der Schönheit" is how his sticky German puts it. In the extracts from *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, Beckett's first novel (which it's extremely useful to be able to get one's hands on, even so patchily), Belacqua is made to stand for an untidy, discomposed art. According to him, Balzacian naturalism is "chloroformed", a world of "clockwork cabages". Belacqua preaches instead corrosion, disfection, debasement – that is, the fruitfulness of gaps, of bursting open literature. In other words, Belacqua views dissection as a most promising pursuit. And Beckett agrees. *Juno and the Paycock* is good because it has "dramatic debasement". The house of fiction must become "ramshackle, tumbledown". The bike of literature is to be a boneshaker. And how negativism accumulates, and in three or four tongues; *Unwork, le rien*, "the Pauline *cupio dissolvi*". The "breakdown of the object", which comes, Beckett asserts, to the same thing as "the breakdown of the subject", is embraced as the essence of the modern. There was evidently no tougher solipsist

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Institutional £37.00 Individual £18.00

SAGE Publications Ltd  
28 Banner Street  
London EC2Y 5BE, UK



around in 1938, not even counting Joyce himself, than Cohn's Beckett. Dennis Devlin is a fine poet precisely because he eschews social subjects, materialisms, and socialist realisms: he pleases Beckett for being so *Extraudenary*.

The "dehiscing" Beckett has little that's genial about him, nothing much that hints of Calder's recuperated Parnassian, the Grand Old Man Of Modern Letters, the Nobel Laureate. Nor of the meditative writer praised by Christopher Ricks on the back cover of Calder's volume for being "the great soothsayer of our age" who has revived "an art of contemplation" despite "a world of sick hurry". In disjection Beckett is the sick joker and jostler, the burryer-up and shitter-upon. "*Es wandelt niemand ungestraft unter Palmen* is particularly applicable to these islands, where pigeons meet with such encouragements. But it is preferable to dying of mirage."

That came from Beckett on "Recent Irish Poetry" in 1934. But what about fifty years on? It suits Calder's book to dwell on the calm, the "equanimity" of the late fictions *Still* and *Company*. To his credit, however, Calder also gets cagey about the renewed menace of *Ill Seen*. "It might be said to be already opening out a new late phase". If that's so, *Worstward Ho* is in that phase. It might also be said that both texts affirm some of the most reborative of Beckett's oldest and most persistent strains.

Granted that the litany of truncated parts of speech of which *Worstward Ho* consists gets very hypnotic and so almost lulling. Granted, as well, that this text's old man and child, fallen and exiled from paradise or the womb or whatever, are yet in motion and visible. "Hand in hand with equal plod they go." Granted, again, that the "scene" that's "seen" and "said" here is promised continuing existence ("Least never to be naught. Unullable least") so long as the observing, containing head and eye and voice

survive. And, to be sure — like the paradox of "Gone for good" — the prevailing rhetoric of worseness and leastness does indeed scrape up a kind of self-refuting positive air which has something to do with the superlative mostness of its awfulness (*Leastmost, dimmest, Unmost dim*). Utterance still contrives to ooze out and to get itself *secreted*. And the text is moved to joy over this. "Remains of mind then still. Enough still. Somewhere somewhere somehow enough still. No mind and words? Even such words. So enough still. Just enough still to joy. Joy!"

As grounds for readerly joy, however, *Worstward Ho* still looks pretty slight, even pinchbeck. After all, what it utters is the terror of a solipsism of text as shocking and as unalliable by that sliver of joy as Murphy's solipsism of self was unalliated by jokes and general lightness of address. The saying and being said whose continuance — "Say on. Be said on" — might be supposed, on Calder lines, to inspire it us amounts to too little for that purpose. In brief — and by this stage Beckett always is in brief — there's no evading hereabouts that hardest of all reflections, the terrible notion of the uttermost silencing of the death of language, of speakers, narrators, writers, oneself. "What when words gone? None for what then." At such moments playing with paradoxes like "Gone for good" doesn't comfort. This is a disconsolation that *Worstward Ho* rightly acknowledges as being familiar to Beckett and Beckett's readers. "All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." *Falling better* might have more dash and finish, even less finching about it — which can all be claimed of this latest Beckett — but it is also, logically, to be even worse off spiritually, humanly speaking. *Worstward Ho* is back, for better or worse, where Ruby Cohn's collection shows Beckett so powerfully starting.

## Haunted moments

Tim Dooley

DESMOND HOGAN  
*A Curious Street*  
194pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
0241 10758 X

*A Curious Street*, Desmond Hogan's third novel, is a significant advance on his previous fiction. The tension between lyrical and documentary ambitions which led to some very odd contrasts of tone and narrative manner in his two collections of stories (*The Diamonds at the Bottom of the Sea* and *Children of Lir*) seems more nearly resolved in this novel, while its historical scope enables Hogan to explore his Whitmanesque vision of the modern Irish soul more fully and with greater clarity than in his last novel, *The Leaves on Grey*.

*A Curious Street* is composed of three distinct, interrelated narratives: the first-person reminiscences of Jeremy Hitchens — a British soldier of English and Irish parentage serving a tour of duty in Belfast during 1977; reconstructions of the life of Alan Mulvanney — a teacher from Athlone who loved, but proved incapable of being the lover of, Hitchens's mother Eileen Carmody; the plot outline of *A Cavalier Against Time* — a novel supposedly written by Mulvanney during the 1940s, set in the 1640s and '50s during Cromwell's invasion of Ireland, looked away by its author in a drawer but surviving in a kind of oral tradition (via Eileen Carmody's retelling of the story to her son) and proving emblematic for the group of teenage friends Hitchens draws to himself in a small Irish town in the 1960s. *A Cavalier Against Time*, a rare success in the sub-genre of fictional fictions, tells the story of Lorcan O'Mahony and Eleanor O'Keefe, lovers influenced by a legendary Celtic Christian poet of gnomic persuasion ("If you give birth to what is within you, you will be saved") and by rumours of Digger and Leveller utopianism, who set out to preach of the new age based on love and brotherhood and the sun — like thwarted by history and chance and end in exile.

His priests would come tripping from the Royal College of the Noble Irish in Salamanca with the latest ill-tidings from Ireland; Alighting, the coming of the migrants from Wales, the pond lily, the access

ion of the bonny, aged queen. But all the time (Lorcan's) mind would not be in war and devastation but on a young man and woman on a white horse preaching peace and how the years had plucked out their idealism and mutilated their love like a portrait of a young man with the eyes torn out.

In the larger novel, Jeremy and his friends Eugene McDermott and Cherine Finnerty live out Lorcan's and Eleanor's innocence and experience, their idealism and defeat. Their quests for individuality of expression, whether sexual or intellectual, lead to confusion, madness, exile or denial of their roots. In his Belfast barracks, Jeremy sees Irish history as "a chaos which will go on and on, which nothing will stop... except a gesture of love". Listening to the story of *A Cavalier Against Time*, Eileen Carmody stares "at the drawer where the novel was locked away as though at a terrible wound". Alan Mulvanney's failure as a lover in 1943 "would have more impact for her than war, massacres, concentration camps or, eventually, twin clouds over cities in the Far East". Her son, the narrator of the novel, tries to uncover the sources of this silence and impotence and of Mulvanney's later madness and eventual suicide. He finds them in the contradictions and cruelties of patriarchy: the tormenting of a retarded youth by sexually frustrated fathers; the humiliation experienced by Cherine's cousin Sabina as a failed Hollywood starlet; Mrs McDermott's destruction of her "effeminate" son's toy theatre — hitting him in the face, shouting "Time to grow up, Eugene, time to grow up." The final section of the novel juxtaposes the burning of a house owned by two Protestant women during the Civil War of the 1920s with the writing of a poem by the nine-year-old Alan. What Hogan calls elsewhere the child's "first, secure and healing vision" is seen as the only hope against ruin.

The novel is not without its flaws. In particular, Jeremy's decision to join the British Army is psychologically unconvincing, and Hogan's continued obsessions with white shirts or the punk in Bewley's restaurant can become tiresome. Both in scope and intensity, however, *A Curious Street* is an unusually powerful work, whose vision of a life where "All moments are haunted by other moments" and "there is an ancestry to our every act" is refreshing in its combination of passion and responsibility.

## Dream America

John Clute

THOMAS BERGER  
*The Feud*  
265pp. Methuen. £8.50.  
413 540502

Thirty years ago, L. P. Hartley said that the past was a foreign country; after two World Wars, a Waste Land, social upheavals, a Welfare State, rationing and loss of Empire, he was saying the obvious with that touch of genius that allows the rest of us to see the obvious too, just a fraction late. Hartley's insight has become a staple of modern England's perception of itself, with few novels of the present day omitting to see the past through baffles of atrophy, sclerosis and shrinkage. No remembered Arcadia fails to bear the stigmata of the factory farm to come.

Turning to America, and to Thomas Berger's *The Feud*, we find ourselves couched in a dream of the past so removed from Hartley's that we might be on a different planet. It is surely a different universe of discourse. For *The Feud* is set in the heart of the continent of America, an ancient land as old as the oldest movie, but one which exists to this day. In this America, the past is the same country. It may be narrower, cleaner, more wholesome than the present, but it can be reached. The true things that can be said about 1934 are sayable about 1984, too.

There are no dates in *The Feud*, though it is clearly set in the middle of the 1930s; no cities are mentioned by name, no movie stars, no states, no Presidents. Internal evidence leads us to believe that the feuding twin towns of Hornbeck and Millville are some distance from the Atlantic Ocean, a long ways east of the Mississippi, and north of the Mason-Dixon Line. One might locate them in Frank Capra country, or Mickey Rooney country; but neither of them is mentioned. A kind of silence

surrounds the extraordinary events depicted in *The Feud*, as though we were dreaming a dream in which we were reunited with the lost parents of our childhoods.

In this silence of dream America, in two small towns in the middle of the continent in 1935, pandemonium breaks loose. Dolf Beeler from Hornbeck tries to buy some paint remover from Bud Bullard's hardware shop in Millville. Something goes skew-wiff. Within moments, Bud's loco relative, Reverton Kirby, has pulled a pistol on Dolf; within hours, the hardware shop has burned to the ground and Dolf's car has exploded; within days, Bud has a nervous breakdown, Dolf a fatal heart attack, Reverton is beaten half to death and then shot while impersonating a police officer, Dolf's son has beaten up another police officer, Bud's son has robbed a diner with Reverton's pistol. Eros and Thanatos — both unnamed because nobody knows how to say anything about either sex or death — run wild. It is hilarious, and also very moving. It is at the same time ludicrously alien and shockingly intimate.

The dire complexities of the plot would have a Jacobean ring to them, were there a single character in the book capable of the gnarled reflections about the terrible world that are typical of a Jacobean protagonist or villain. But there are no thoughts in *The Feud*. We're in Arcadia, with no whiff of the factory farm. Dolf and Bud and their two swarming families, like the lads and lasses of pastoral tragic-comedy, perform their steps and moues without an inkling of the ironies of the world beyond. Just like Americans, one might say.

It is certainly the case that Thomas Berger is no fool, and he cannot be unaware of the implications of his fable of the past within us. His Americans are funny, and vulnerable, and good-hearted, and we love them in *The Feud*. But they have a deadly innocence, they kill people, and they wake up the next morning, fresh as daisies, just as though God had whispered to them in their sleep, Everything's OK. The slate is wiped clean. Start again.

## Nihilism, Inc.

Neville Shack

KATHY ACKER  
*Blood and Guts in High School*  
Plus Two  
412pp. Pan Books: Picador. £8.95 (paperback, £2.95).  
0330 28326 X

These plain tales have been expelled from the bunker of punk sensibility; now they must negotiate a way around the landmines of the real world. Unfair perhaps, because Kathy Acker is a sectarian writer. Her prose is programmed to serve certain recurring themes: prapic; vulgar, scatological, sexually exploitative in general. Some would use the shorthand description, pornographic. Yet the object is usually to disgust, not titillate.

Genital fantasies are almost invariably boring. Their range of metaphors and images is quickly exhausted. In this particular case, a strident anti-humanism grants the writer licence to convert people into the instruments of their private parts; fear and loathing in the erogenous zones.

Janey, the central character of "Blood and Guts in High School" (the first of three pieces collected here), is an anti-anti-heroine to such a degree that she ends up being abused by Jean Genet, who appears in a cameo rôle. For her sins, they knock about in North Africa together. Through the horrors of her adolescence she has assured us that human emotions are mostly garbage, and even more worthless. There is a kind of effect in the combining of a shrill tone with some recognizable conventions of a picaresque story.

But does this limited energy do much to heighten the power of the material? Not really. For all its nodding to the forms of experimental writing, the content here gets progressively jaded. The book as a whole leads us to expect startling and radical reinterpretations of reality. There are some isolated passages where the libido breaks through subversively. There are others where the depiction of sickness in society rings true. But, by the end, Acker's

failure to provoke you fully into any reaction whatsoever is more surprising than this or that detail in the book. She does not rise to her own challenge as a visceral writer. Picturing the ways in which the self can be degraded, she is content to highlight the banalities of a small corner of experience — in neon. It induces more stupor than retching (though it has been reported that proof-readers at Picador were "unhappy" about dealing with this work.)

The second story, "Great Expectations" (more spleen than spoof as far as Dickens's example goes), continues trading from a view of the world as an emporium of mindless sex. Allowances are made for romance as a notional American commodity, but paranoia and the reduction of men to sexual tyrants interrupt. The confessional line in the writing sounds sincere enough ("I'm going to tell you something. The author of the work you are now reading is a scared little shit"). That rawness, no longer very workable as a shock tactic, seems to leave the book even more ruffled.

In the final story there might or might not be a homage to the late Pier Paolo Pasolini. There is topical social comment, like the suggestion that President Reagan is using AIDS to control the American populace. Also, a gross re-write of *Macbeth*, in which Banquo's dead body would incite the living to necrophilia if it had the slightest chance.

Kathy Acker, like many "shocking" writers, maintains a high profile. Neat Wasp family background, followed by the mess of New York and West Coast acceptance. Robert Mapplethorpe, one of the most vigorous of homoerotic photographers, has recorded her on the back cover shielding exposed breasts with her elbows. The pose works very well, containing a totally natural charm. In her own work she is said to see herself standing against "poseur" nihilism. The hazards are obvious, notwithstanding. True, she can't really be accused of fey pretentiousness; but the dividing line between specific areas of nihilism is thin. Ultimately, if not before, the subject-matter rebels against the writer's control, and the reader might well have given up.

## Five poems by Paul Muldoon

Pandas

The shuttlecock had lain in your lap  
like the barely perceptible  
birth of a panda.

C'mon, you said. For half an hour  
we thwacked it to and fro  
across the imaginary badminton-net  
rigged up in our back entry.

C'mon, you said. Then it got spirited  
over the wall, into the bamboo  
of Friar's Bush cemetery.

Impossible bamboo. The cholera-mound,  
the graves of so many  
prominent men, their would-be children  
in pantalettes: sea-squirt, anemone.

Tibet

What with her latex mask and far-flung  
breasts and nipples,

the Velcro-strip  
between her legs,

he might have given that wardrobe-girl  
one hell of a sky-burial.

He unzips  
his lightweight sleeping-bag.

Their Nepalese  
guide translates a flame from dung —

Last night trade soil  
for sky.

Much high.  
Come air so thin-thin kettle no boll.

Bears

for Mary Powers

I ought to begin with Evelyn Waugh's  
'How old's that noise?'

when you wander arbi-  
trarily into *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*.

Wahl, Wahl, Wahl,  
your great-great-grandmother's wail

as she froze to death in a cranberry-patch  
among the Pennsylvania Dutch.

Yaddo. Your father consecrating priests  
while Lowell and Roethke  
made like bears and beasts.

I can no more calm your dutiful outcry  
than the luncheon-guest  
who dutifully clasps you to his breast.

Toxophilus

They'll meet, invariably, outside *Newsweek*  
and hail a cab.

The driver wants to talk.  
His pal, sec, sold a 'state of the art'  
micro-chip  
to the Japanese. He ended as a wet-job  
on a Third Avenue sidewalk.  
No shit. A teeny-weeny poison dart.

'The right art', the Master told Herrigel,  
'is purposeless, aimless.  
The shot must fall from the archer  
like snow from a bamboo leaf.  
It shoots. It hits.  
At last the bowstring has cut through you.'

In her apartment in the high West Eighties  
he lies tattoo-  
lightly  
between her thighs. Inevitably, inevitably,  
they set each other up as statues  
to Eros, sec, and Aphrodite.

Wolves

de Vigny

A harvest moon, and the cloud-scurry  
of smoke in a hurry  
to quit a camp-fire. The woods ran black  
to the horizon. No one spoke

as we tramped through wet grass,  
deep gorse  
and heathers.  
Near a stand of firs

we came on the huge prints  
of the wolves we were hunting.  
We stopped in mid-stride, held our breath,  
listened. The woods and heath

were still. Only a distant weather-  
cock swivelled.  
The wind was so above it all  
its feet brushed only the tallest

of spires, while the oak-trees  
hunched between the rocks  
far below  
slept in the crooks of their own elbows.

The oldest and most experienced, Alfred,  
went down on all fours  
in the sand  
so as not to lose the scent.

He whispered to the rest of us  
that the marks of their powerful claws  
were almost-new  
and everything pointed to

a pair of full-grown and two young wolves.  
We took out our knives.  
Our cloaks hid the glint of our muskets.  
We started into the thicket.

Handwritten note in margin: 50 11 15 50



# American notes

## Christopher Hitchens

Stephen King is a fiction writer. He is the sort of fiction writer who is supposed to be confined to airport bookstalls and drugstore counters: the blockbuster author who is sold only in supermarkets. Yet his novels are not, any more, hidden away guiltily by the literate, or dismissed with a light shrug as something bought merely to read on a business trip. He is being read and discussed as an American chronicler, even as a possible successor to John O'Hara in the depiction of middle-class and small-town life.

This is possibly not what King himself intended. As a young man from a poor background, teaching English in a small private school in Maine, he found himself stirred by reading Bram Stoker to his pupils, and set out to be a genre writer of horror and suspense. Many of his titles – *Carrie*, *The Shining* and *Christine* – are better known as bad films than as books. And his later work shows the usual signs of having been written with a conglomerated movie deal in mind. His accession to the *New York Times* best-seller list is guaranteed in advance of publication. The adjectives – “spine-chilling” and “blood-curdling” are among the most original – adorn his blurbs like eyeballs on a sleeve.

Whatever the source of King's commercial success, his triumph in hardback sales and among a growing public can't be explained by the horror quotient. He is unusually incompetent at creating a *frisson*. He relies on completely hackneyed ideas, such as sinister children or possessed pets, for his effects. There is a great deal of borrowing, too, from classics like *The Exorcist* and from “disgust” works such as *Friday the 13th*. Whatever explains his appeal, it can't be the creaking floorboards or the gruesome infants.

There is a reason why King has risen above the ephemeral. He spends a great deal of his time in crafting descriptions of the American

landscape and of American mores. He has an ear for popular culture, for speech rhythms, and for musical idioms. He can evoke the atmosphere of a small-town high school or a typical family, and he has a “feel” for the generational changes which accelerate with each decade and which have left many writers of his age (late thirties) bemused or bewildered. His principal gift as an author of internal dialogue, which is seen to best advantage in *Christine*, is that of sympathy. He can imagine, and put into words, the emotions of others. Allied to a sociological training, which allows him to see the ways in which small community and family life are altering, this helps him to find a real American voice.

*Christine*, which culminates absurdly in a rogue automobile coming to vindictive life, is otherwise a lengthy account of teenage culture in a rather rickety middle-class community. It contains glosses on recent film and less recent popular music, which make it a document that might not disgrace John Updike's Pennsylvania mode. *Pet Sematary* (sic) concentrates on the tone and style of Maine: on the “downeast” accent and tradition. It is disfigured only by the stupid ideas of reincarnation and demonic possession. If Mr King could give up horror and tripe altogether, he might find that he no longer needed them to attract the agents, promoters and other drones who are now giving him more money than is good for him.

Recently there was a set-piece television programme nationally networked, which discussed the appalling difficulties experienced by new writers. The huge diversion of resources to the Stephen King industry and the granting of multimillion dollar advances to other established authors was cited (with King's approval) as obstacles to even a modest financing of aspiring or original craftsmen. If Shiv K. Kumar saw the programme he must have creased a smile. He is a Distinguished Professor at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania

and a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He has been extensively published in his native India. His latest novel, *Nude Before God*, has drawn warm applause from Graham Greene and from David Daiches. And yet it is published here by what can only be called, with respect, a vanity press. This is a shame, because *Nude Before God* is very funny and clever and rather moving. It concerns the Hindu painter Ram Krishna, who is done in by his Christian wife's lover and who has the chance of observing from the spirit or karma world, to confirm and allay some of his baser earthly suspicions. His dialogues with Lord Yama, who supervises death, are often hilarious (“If I let you humans butter me up like this, I wouldn't be able to do my job”). Various precepts of the *Bhagavad Gita* are lightly taken: there is a nicely satirical attitude towards religious rivalry in India. A modernist and emancipated writer, dealing with his native traditions rather fluently, might be thought to be a going proposition in the United States. But Kumar has to publish his own book, solicit his own testimonials, and, presumably most disheartening of all, see to his own distribution.

India does not hold the commanding place in the American imagination that it does in the British. Still, the reception given to Kumar contrasts poorly with that given to G. V. Desani in the early 1950s, when he convulsed New York with his *All About H. Hatterr*. Subtitled “A Gesture”, the book was recommended by Eliot and Forster and published by Farrar Straus, Giroux. It was not popular as you might expect just because of its babu curiosities of speech and style. Critics noticed resemblances between Desani and Runyon, Desani and Twain, Desani and S. J. Perelman. Of these, Runyon is the easiest influence to detect at first: “And she threatens to shoot all present, and promises to dispatch the remains to the home counties”. Perhaps, though, Twain is present in the following:

“My father used to say”, he whispers to me aside, sub silentio like, “privacy is essential for attacking enemies, offering prayers, casting spells, eating of the forbidden meat, administering poisons, and sexual intercourse. These enterprises, Uncle, must not be attempted in the presence of the public.”

Then there are unclassifiable multilingual puns, and suggestive expressions (“feeling non-optional, I went round the bush”) or Shandeyque interludes, such as: “Two Marbles Theatre to see a talking-picture-show-tamasha, appertaining to one occidental moaner-chanter Bing Crosby. The chief beam-projection was preceded by a news-narration, and an appetite-incubating ostentation by Donald Sheldrake and the hamster Mickie.” Desani and Kumar both have scenes set in Benares, and both have a vaguely scurrilous attitude to

the priesthood. Kumar's line is cleaner than the genial, deceptive chaos of Desani. It seems sad that Indian writing, as opposed to writing about India, should have undergone a decline in readership and critical attention since Mr H. Hatterr took American critics by storm a generation ago.

Every time another book about “the New York intellectuals” makes an appearance, there is a feeling that it must be the last. This feeling is entirely mistaken. Not until the last surviving participant has penned his or her account will there be any release. Not until then will the way be clear for a definitive history, or even for a thorough doctoral thesis. And one disappointing or inadequate book on the field is the signal for a host of revisions and contestations, all of them materials for another provisional history.

Such an opportunity has been provided by William Phillips, editor of *Parisian Review*, whose memoir *A Parisian View: Five decades of the literary life* has just been published by Stein and Day (312pp. \$19.75). Phillips has been assailed in the conservative *New Criterion* for his selective memory and scorned in the radical reviews for his attacks on Lillian Hellman and his denial of her charges about “left McCarthyism”. More neutral commentators have expressed disdaint at Phillips for his post-humous and snide attack on his long-time co-editor Philip Rahv. The nastiness and gall of this passage eclipse the chapters on American literary history and on PR's attempt to synthesize sober “standards” in writing with critical politics and libertarian ideas.

Saul Bellow is said to have remarked, when he quit New York for Chicago, that he was fed up with intellectuals who had to take a position on everything. One of the younger members of the PR team gave me this recollection recently, adding that in those days the literary intellectuals had been too political, and the political ones too literary. Phillips does not quite get over this problem by his suggestion, in an earlier consideration of writers and politics, that both literature and politics, “though in very different fashion and addressed – at least in their immediacy – to different constituencies expect to ‘re-invent the world’”.

Meanwhile, at *Parisian Review* itself a promising row is in the making. Professor Norman Birnbaum of Georgetown University has been dropped from the board because he, in effect, accused it of becoming no more than a quarterly supplement to *Commentary*. This dispute, too, will find its place in the annals, and will need a historian. On the evidence of his most recent work, Mr Phillips has enhanced that need rather than supplied it.

## FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of February 8, 1934, carried the following review by D. L. Murray of *The Quest for Corvo: An experiment in biography* by A. J. A. Symons:

Few things, we imagine, would more acutely have exasperated the glooming shade of the eccentric Catholic romancer Frederick Rolfe (self-styled Baron Corvo) than a conventional biography, however panegyric. He has been spared the indignity. Mr A. J. A. Symons has chosen to tell the story of his mysterious life in a book that has the thrill of a good detective novel. Such methods were in fact needed to unravel the history of this ill-starred author. The quest began when a friend gave Mr Symons a copy of “Hadrian VII,” Rolfe's fantastic dream of an imaginary English Pope (himself) at the opening of the twentieth century, together with a bundle of his letters. The fascination of that strange, burning style and that idly veiled personality laid enduring hold of Mr Symons as it has of others among Frederick Rolfe's readers, and he devoted himself to the search for the rest of Rolfe's letters, for the truth about his broken, vagabond existence, and for the lost manuscripts which he was known to have left behind him. The task has been crowned with a success that, in the eyes of Rolfe's admirers, amply repays the toil involved.

After all, he matters most to-day as a writer, and it is to be hoped, that his unpublished works, some of which were based on collabora-

tion with one of his most patient friends, Mr Harry Plie-Gordon, and which include an imaginary history of medieval England, “Hubert's Arthur,” as well as another autobiographical volume, “The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole,” many ultimately see the light. Popular such as eccentric stylist can hardly hope to become, though his audacities, consisting chiefly in the creation of new Latinisms (often both beautiful and expressive), pale in the light of post-War experiments in vocabulary and syntax. But that his books were not killed by their initial failure and by the obloquy amid which their author floundered is proof that his genius was neither illusory nor superficial. He will continue to be read by those who care for the ruthless self-stripping of a soul and by those who can share his pagan delight in the beauty of form and colour and all the pomps of the visible world. Indeed, the conflict of pagan with Catholic Christian in Rolfe is what gives its peculiar intensity to his writing. Only in the restful naivety of his peasant tales entitled “In His Own Image” (some of which first appeared in the *Yellow Book*) is Olympus for a dream-like moment harmonized with Mount Zion. In “Don Quixote” the Renaissance pride of the flesh quenches the spirit; in “Hadrian VII,” the spirit appears haggard and faint from the unequal contest with the body. From the record of these conflicts there arises an aroma at once acrid and seductive, like the scent of bruised leaves trodden down by a Church procession.

# Letters

## T. S. Eliot

Sir, – I should like to make a few comments on Robert Hewison's piece in your issue of January 27.

He implies that the decision to have Vivienne Eliot certified was taken by her husband. In fact it was proposed to her brother Maurice Haigh-Wood by her physician Dr Miller, who considered that she was in need of professional care. Maurice conveyed this opinion (July 14, 1938) to T. S. Eliot who was away at the time and followed it with another letter (August 17) to say that she was in Northumberland House and reported to be “fairly cheerful, had slept well and eaten well, and had sat out in the garden and read a certain amount”. Incidentally, Maurice Haigh-Wood, who became a close friend, died on May 18, 1980.

Mr Hewison states that “the Eliot Trustees acquire any documentary material [concerning Vivienne] that comes available”. Can he give a single instance of such an acquisition? I know of none, and I am the sole trustee.

Ash Wednesday, published in a small limited edition in 1930, carried the dedication “to my wife”, but this was removed by T. S. Eliot when he prepared *Collected Poems 1909-35* (1936).

“Truth hath a quiet breast”, so I have found no “conflicting responsibilities” in editing his letters, the first volume of which will be delivered to Faber's by the end of June. This early record, in some ways the most important of all, is inevitably the hardest to assemble and I wish to make it as comprehensive as possible. The other volumes are in hand.

VALERIE ELIOT,  
c/o Faber and Faber, 3 Queen Square, London WC1.

Sir, – I do not think I shall feel drawn to see Michael Hastings's play, *Tom and Viv*, but Robert Hewison's preliminary puff (“Behind the Lines”, January 27) calls for comment if only for what its tone and manner reveal about some parts of the literary world. If the piece was not so offensive to those who love and honour T. S. Eliot, it would be amusing in the picture it gives of scholars hampered in their work because “it is very difficult . . . to study the details of Eliot's first marriage”. I do not know any such scholars, and don't believe they exist. But Mr Hewison is not really concerned with what he plausibly calls “the demands of scholarship”, and his appeal to scholarship is plainly humbug; what he offers, and suggests the play offers, is something closer to the prurient delights of the gossip-column – “as though the abounding gutter had been Hell-on-wheels”. I find it hateful that a writer in a literary journal should pander to the all-too-common fear and dislike of greatness, the desire to cut it down to something more easily manageable.

What is in question is something much more important than the susceptibilities of ageing men and women who grew up with – to a large extent grew up on – Eliot's poems; it is those standards of taste which, you may agree, have so much to do with the tone and quality of the general life. In allowing trivialization of this kind to creep into your columns you do a disservice. As Henry James says somewhere, “vulgarity that is never corrected is like a neglected cold; you can die of it morally as well as of anything else.”

Incidentally, Mr Hewison uses the slur of “fascist sympathies”. Younger readers who know the general import of “fascist” but are unaware of the facts would do well to consult A. D. Moody's *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet, Appendix C*, pp 319-26, “The Christian philosopher and politics between the wars”. Mr Moody has the advantage of knowing what he is talking about.

I. C. KNIGHTS,  
51 Leam Lane, Cambridge.

Sir, – Robert Hewison's “Behind the Lines” (January 27) raises the issue of access to sensitive T. S. Eliot materials.

T. S. Eliot and Conrad Alken's correspondence is available for scholars to consult at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. No restrictions whatsoever were placed in my way when I visited the library and studied the documents in 1982.

The “King Bolo” limericks are a part of Eliot's correspondence with Aiken. They date from before 1914 and were also being written

in the late 1950s. The limericks do not show T. S. Eliot in a favourable light.  
WILLIAM BAKER,  
10 Streather Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.

## The Rosenberg Case

Sir, – Hugh Brogan's review (December 23, 1983) of *The Rosenberg File* by Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton quite properly begins by alerting the British reader to the absence of the footnote section and then states: “a reviewer with no first-hand acquaintance with the documents can have little confidence in his views.” Mr Brogan then goes on to ignore totally his own warning.

Item: “Radosh and Milton have tried to be dispassionate and scholarly.” How can Brogan know? As the elder son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg I am undoubtedly a partisan observer, but I am not alone in noting the absence of footnote references for crucial links in their argument, the falsification of the import both of certain key documents referred to and of interviews conducted with ex-Communist Party officials, the failure to acknowledge and come to grips with documents that would lead one to diametrically opposite conclusions to the ones reached in the text, and many other egregious errors (or worse) that make this book, in my opinion, an intellectual fraud.

Item: “a broad unchallengeable trail led from Klaus Fuchs, via his ‘cousin’, Harry Gold, to David Greenglass, Ethel Rosenberg's brother.” In fact, researchers Walter and Miriam Schneir (*Invitation to an Inquiry*, Pantheon, 1983, new expanded edition) and an American Public Television documentary, *The Unquiet Death of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg*, have both concluded that Harry Gold is an extremely weak link in this chain. Radosh and Milton ignore a number of documents that would lead one to believe that though Gold willingly confessed to being Fuchs's courier he in fact was not. Please note: they ignore these documents. Even readers of their footnotes never learn they exist.

Item: “it remains . . . impossible to believe that Greenglass would have framed his sister.” If this is Brogan's belief then he did not need Radosh and Milton's book, because the trial record contains Greenglass's original testimony against my parents. What Radosh and Milton's book includes is the demonstration that David and Ruth Greenglass fabricated the crucial testimony against my mother six weeks before the trial. If they could do this, why is Brogan so incredulous about our charges that, out of fear for his life and the life of his wife, David Greenglass signed a false confession implicating (falsely) my father in espionage after twelve hours of interrogation (while his wife was in the hospital recovering from near-fatal burns)? Once he had signed the confession and accusation, there was no going back. The FBI notes of the twelve hours of interrogation were all destroyed and the only thing researchers have is the original statement.

Item: “Nor is there the slightest evidence that Greenglass lied on the essential points.” This is quite disingenuous. What are “the essential points”? They are that David and Ruth Greenglass and my parents agreed to do some spying, and furthermore that David used his memory to draw diagrams and dictate descriptions about his work on the atom bomb project. There is no evidence that this occurred save the word of the Greenglasses, and according to the FBI material much of the story changed before the trial. On “non-essential” points: the recognition signal with Harry Gold (“I come from Julius”), the Greenglass family's passport photos, an alleged Russian gift console table, an allegedly stolen proximity fuse, the work of previous researchers is buttressed by the FBI files: the Greenglasses lied. These “non-essential” points are the only way to test the credibility of the Greenglasses which formed the entire basis of the jury's initial decision condemning my parents.

Finally, to say that Stalin abandoned the Greek Communists as a nuisance does not give the real picture. At the Moscow and Yalta conferences, Stalin traded Greece for Romania in the “percentage agreement” with Churchill. It is as simple as that.

The photograph used to illustrate the review says much about the horrors brought on

by the late 1950s. The limericks do not show T. S. Eliot in a favourable light.  
WILLIAM BAKER,  
10 Streather Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.

Sir, – Like most misogynists, Peter Kemp (Commentary, February 3) seems incapable of hearing what women are actually saying. No

doubt Angela Carter and Maggie Gee can both speak for themselves, but please allow me to correct his travesty of my speech at the Barbi-can on Public Writers' Day.

Of course I didn't say anything as daft as “that Lawrence's attitude to women is more admirable than Orwell's since Lawrence enjoyed the benefit of being reared among non-sexist Nottinghamshire miners”. I was talking about *language*, and what I said in essence was that Lawrence (by no means a hero of the women's movement) never used the terms “he” or “men” generically in his essays, but always balanced them with the terms “she” and “women”. This, I suggested, was no accident, but evidence of his close emotional relationships with women, particularly his wife and his mother. Such relationships, I further suggested, were rarely available to a boy of Orwell's class, who would be sent off to prep school, then public school, and so spend the larger part of his youth in an all-male environment. I never even mentioned Nottinghamshire miners!

My point was this: our use of language reveals, consciously or unconsciously, our attitudes towards ourselves, other people, the world. It seems self-evident that Lawrence created some of the most convincing female characters in English literature, whereas in this respect Orwell was a dismal failure.

I was careful nevertheless to point out that I was not anti-Orwell, whom I regard as the patron saint of journalism. But I was asked to speak about him in the context of the contemporary women's movement – and in this context there was little positive to be said.

SHEILA MACLEOD,  
18 Arundel Square, London NW7.

## 'Eleni'

Sir, – Thorough discussion of Peter Green's interesting review (January 20) of *Eleni* by Nicholas Gage would outrun the permissible length of a letter. I will therefore confine myself to a few salient points.

First, to regard the period 1943-49 as a con-tinuum is to subscribe to the theory of “three rounds” of Greek civil war, not by any means acceptable to all historians of modern Greece. The Greek wartime left-wing Resistance – or rather liberation movement – arose out of three antecedents: the pre-war Metaxas dictatorship, the victorious Greek response to Italian invasion and its betrayal by a defeatist High Command, leading to Axis occupation. The 1947-49 civil war was an inevitable result of post-war persecution of that movement. At that time Greece was a British protectorate. Had Britain insisted on implementation by the Greek Government of the Varkiza Agreement, which ended the clashes of December 1944, there would have been no civil war.

Second, the term “Nationalist” should not be used in a wartime context. Zervas's EDES movement started out as republican but, while its Athens Committee soon sank into collaboration, Zervas himself, on British prompting (for which C. M. Woodhouse has taken full responsibility in his books), found that the monarchist cause offered him better prospects and became in effect an executant of British policy. The term “Nationalist” first became current during the events of December 1944 and was thereafter used as a euphemism to cover a multitude of sins, including former collaborationist Security Battalions and irregular right-wing bands.

Third, while Zervas's fluctuating contacts with the Germans have been fully documented from German sources, the same sources show that this cannot be said of ELAS. One approach was made, at the same time as the crucial approach to Zervas. The ELAS commander who received it informed his GHQ, who forbade further contact and retired him from his command for his error of judgment in even receiving the delegation. I met the man in Athens and know his story.

Finally, to say that Stalin abandoned the Greek Communists as a nuisance does not give the real picture. At the Moscow and Yalta conferences, Stalin traded Greece for Romania in the “percentage agreement” with Churchill. It is as simple as that.

The photograph used to illustrate the review says much about the horrors brought on

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# Letters

Greece by foreign intervention; in the same archive, there is a letter of May 18, 1950, from the Foreign Office confirming at least 3,000 executions by Greek governments prior to that date.

MARION SARAFIS.  
Flat 3, Bracken Hill, Heathside Crescent, Woking, Surrey.

Sir, — Peter Green's review (January 20) of Nicholas Gage's *Eleni* is based on apparent historical fair-mindedness and scholarship, apart from the fact that the terms "sadist" and "killers" are applied only to Communist guerrillas. That might be a matter of personal moral judgment. When, however, he expresses his astonishment at "just how far the Greek left has gone, since 1974, in completely rewriting the civil war", Green fails to point out that the right wing began rewriting the civil war as soon as it was over, and that this could not help but bring about a reaction. One of the beneficial effects of the post-1974 "rewriting" has been the integration in society of the children and relatives of left-wing guerrillas whom the right-wing *nesikakia* had excluded from participation in the *politeia*. Another is reflected by a military officer checking himself in public and using the expression *emphylios* (civil war) instead of *symmoriopolismos* (war against the gangs), a word laden with right-wing prejudice.

*Eleni* comes at a moment when a more balanced evaluation of the subject may be possible. But this will not be done by maintaining that the pre-1974 "rewriting" of the Greek civil war is the correct one.

FAY ZIKA.  
Poste Restante, Aigios, Greece.

## The Coherent Voice

Sir, — My assumptions about how and what words mean were rattled when I read your issue of December 30, 1983, and discovered "clarity" as "the death of language" (in a review by Tom Paulin of a book by Richard A. MacCabe of Tom Raworth's poem *Writing*). This is tonic, I thought: it takes nerve to brush these semantic cobwebs aside. Depravity no doubt is the spice of virtue; consistency must be the fledgling of fools.

ALEXANDER HUTCHINSON.  
Miracle Beach, RR 1, Black Creek, British Columbia, Canada.

## 'West African Passage'

Sir, — Roland Oliver, in his review (January 20) of Margery Perham's *West African Passage*, insinuates a broad criticism of British "indirect rule" that has, apparently, become the current orthodoxy. That view deserves to be questioned, not least on the ground that it incorporates a set of ethnocentric assumptions which the officials who developed and applied indirect rule were anxious — and, in my view, rightly anxious — to eschew.

Oliver cites implied strictures on the condition of government in Yorubaland "after nearly forty years of colonial rule". Forty

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 160  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send the answers so that they reach this office not later than March 2. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct — in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 160" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on March 9.

1. ... but their manner of writing is very peculiar; being neither from the left to the right, like the Europeans; nor from the right to the left, like the Arabians; nor from up to down, like the Chinese; nor from down to up, like the Cossacks; but slanting from one corner of the paper to the other, like ladies in England.

2. F. wrote the lines denigrated in a hand as gentlemanly as that of any viscount or bishop of the day; the vowels were all alike and the consonants only distinguishable as turning up or down; the strokes had a blotched solidity and the letters declined to keep the line — in short, it was a

years, historically, is a very short time. Our judgments in this area tend to be distorted by the very success of British colonial governments in creating the essential structures of modern states at breakneck speed: in the case of Nigeria, about a century from the first official incursion to independence.

Indirect rule was designed to produce agreed change through consultation, with a recognition that the pace (especially in the early stages) would be slow, and that the emerging states and civilizations would be *sui generis*. Modernization would not imply Westernization, still less anglicization. It would not involve the imposing from outside of inappropriate cultural prejudices.

I still believe that was sound, in both theory and practice, despite the frustrated walls of the Western-educated nationalists of the 1950s, and that historians will ultimately come to a more balanced view.

A. M. HEALY.  
Department of History, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia.

## The Black Death

Sir, — In the course of his review of *The Black Death: Natural and human disaster in medieval Europe* by Robert S. Gottfried, John Hatcher (a historian) remarks that I am "a scientist tackling the history of his subject with little of the skill, caution or application that he customarily adopts in his laboratory". This judgment is based not on any published work of mine, as one would expect, but on my contribution to a television programme about the Black Death, during which I made "an attempt to question the conventional wisdom" that the disease was true plague. He did not take the opportunity presented by the programme to question my methods; instead he has used the occasion of the review to disparage my work, without citing any evidence in support of his views.

Hatcher would appear to have departed in this matter from the high objective standards he urges on others. The clue to this may perhaps be found in his own judgment that the Black Death induces such a severe state of shock in many contemporary researchers and writers that "normal standards of behaviour and judgment are abandoned". For such a condition may I prescribe a complete rest until the autumn when my book on the biology of the Black Death will be published? I trust that other potential reviewers will suspend judgment until they have been able to read the book.

GRAHAM TWIGG.  
Department of Zoology, Royal Holloway College, Englefield Green, Surrey.

## Conditions at Colindale

Sir, — The British Library's Newspaper Library at Colindale is in some danger of being overwhelmed by its own success. Encouraged by staff publicity of the Library's resources for research, members of historical, genealogical and artistic societies as well as individual researchers have responded in such numbers that

manuscript of that venerable kind easy to interpret when you know beforehand what the writer means.

3. She started the pen in an elephantine arch across the sheet. It was a splendid round, bold band of her own conception; a style that would have stamped a woman as Minerva's own in more recent days.

Competition No 166  
Winner: Evelyn Ward  
Answers:

1. Regard the moon, it hangs above the lawn.  
Regard the lawn, it lies beneath the moon.  
Dylan Thomas, "Should Lanterns Shine", cancelled ending.

2. Regard the moon.  
La lune ne garde aucune rancune.  
She winks a feeble eye.  
She smiles into corners.  
She smooths the hair of the grass.  
The moon has lost her memory.  
T. S. Eliot, "Rhapsody on a Windy Night".

3. I am weary of this moon: would he would change!  
William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.1.

the available facilities are proving quite inadequate.

The position is most acute on a Saturday, the only day on which many members of the public are able to visit the Library; on one recent occasion, by twelve noon every seat in both reading rooms was occupied, and five people were waiting for places, while an hour before that, the staff (who volunteer for overtime working on Saturdays) had had to put a temporary stop on further orders for newspapers. Colleagues tell me that a similar position may be reached two or three times in a week. In these circumstances it is astonishing that the service is as quick and good-humoured as it is.

The existing site at Colindale still allows for considerable expansion at a fraction of the cost which the rehousing of the main British Library is necessitating. Is it too much to hope that some of the British Library's capital resources may be allocated to building an additional reading room, with more up-to-date microfilm readers, and to providing the staff to service both? The accumulation of unique research material is pointless if its existence is unknown, yet to increase publicity and encourage more researchers when facilities are already inadequate seems to be putting the proverbial cart before the horse.

KATHLEEN M. D. BARKER.  
Society for Theatre Research, 77 Kinnerton Street, London SW1.

## Male Feminists

Sir, — Christopher Hitchens remarks ("American Notes", January 6) that he may have "missed something" of Elaine Showalter's argument in her essay, "Critical Cross-Dressing". His comments are indeed incorrect. Her point is in fact the reverse of what Mr Hitchens construes it to be, as those who read the essay in *Raritan* will discover.

In reviewing the work of men writing feminist criticism — a very recent phenomenon — she argues that the male feminist critic should not attempt to read or write "as a woman", thus producing a simulacrum of feminist critical insights and possibly appropriating them in the service of an untransformed set of literary judgments and theories. Rather, he *ought* to "read consciously from his own gender experience". Hitchens misreads as blame her commendation of Jonathan Culler for reading precisely "as a man". The point is a serious one. Elaine Showalter wryly recognizes the "gratifying and unsettling" condition of the feminist

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Z. G. Baranfield is a lecturer in Italian at the University of Reading.

Gillian Beer is a Fellow of Girton College, Cambridge.

David Bell is a lecturer in Politics at the University of Leeds.

Martin Blinkhorn is the author of *Carlism and Crisis in Spain 1931-1939*, 1975.

Richard Brown is co-editor of the *James Joyce Broadsheet*.

F. L. Carsten's *Britain and the Weimar Republic - the British Documents* will be published later this year.

Martin Clark's *Antonio Gramsci and the Revolution that Failed* was published in 1977.

Nell Corcoran's study of David Jones, *The Song of Deeds*, was published last year.

Valentine Cunningham is the author of *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel*, 1975.

Timothy d'Acre Smith's *R. A. Caton and The Fortune Press* was published last year.

Judith Davies is a lecturer in Italian at the University of Cambridge.

Malcolm Deas is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford.

Filippo Desanti was formerly Director of the Italian Institute in London.

Dennis Donoghue is Henry James Professor of English and American Letters at New York University.

H. S. Ferns's book *Inside Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century*, 1960.

Andrew Field's biography of Djuna Barnes, *The Formidable Miss Barnes*, was published last year.

James Griffiths is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

Mark Griffiths is Professor of Classics at the University of California, Berkeley.

Charles Harrover was formerly *The Times* correspondent in Paris.

David Halliwell is Assistant Librarian in the Department of Oriental Books at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Peter Holland is a lecturer at Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

Paul Langford is a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.

Andrew Motion's most recent collection of poems, *Secret Narratives*, was published last year.

Paul Muldoon's most recent collection of poems, *Quoof*, was published last year.

David Pask's *Judicial Review of the Death Penalty* was published in 1982.

P. J. Parish is Director of the Institute of United States Studies at the University of London.

George Philip is the author of *Oil and Politics in Latin America*, 1982.

S. B. Prawer's most recent book, *Heine's Jewish Comedy*, was published last year.

Mark Rieley's *The Explanation of Organic Diversity* will be published shortly.

Nesta Roberts's books include *A Companion Guide to Normandy*, 1980.

Lord Scarman has been a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary since 1977.

Roger Stoddard is Associate Librarian at the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Michael Tanner is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Cambridge.

Nicholas Topping is a lecturer in Latin American Economics at the University of Oxford.

Hugh Trevor-Roper (Lord Dacre) is Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge.

Dennis Walker is the author of *Dickens and Religion*, 1981.

critic who is joined by male allies after so long lamenting the exclusion of her work from "the male critical establishment". Rather than retreating into the feminist isolationism Hitchens attributes to her, she discusses the possibility of a genuinely male feminist criticism.

Christopher Hitchens produces a travesty of her ironic "agenda" by taking it literally. The "dream of the feminist literary conference of the future" is a nightmare, a satiric projection of the way male feminist criticism might be used to ensure continued masculinist dominance of literary studies. Missing the irony, he asks in puzzlement at the conclusion of his summary, "Can that be right?" The answer is "No".

ISOBEL ARMSTRONG.  
Department of English, The University, Southampton.

## Dashiell Hammett

Sir, — A couple of lines dropped from my review (January 27) of Diane Johnson's biography of Dashiell Hammett made one paragraph seem incoherent, even unintelligible. I am made to say that the story of a snapping turtle "prompted Hellman to telephone the New York Zoological Society with questions about the nature of life, although she is prepared to argue with him about speculative matters". Those who wondered about the identity of "him" will like to know that there should be a full stop after "life", followed by: "In relation to Layman, Johnson tries to avoid repeating what he said, although prepared to argue with him about speculative matters." The passage, and the rest of the paragraph, then makes sense.

JULIAN SYMONS.  
Grotton House, 330 Dover Road, Walmer, Deal, Kent.

## A Brecht Edition

Sir, — As part of their edition of Brecht's works in English, Methuen London are planning a third volume of Brecht's *Poems and Songs*, incorporating previously unpublished and/or uncollected material. As joint editor of the volume (with John Willett), might I, through your columns, ask readers who may have translated any of these works to send them in the first instance to Nicholas Hern at Methuen, 11 New Fetter Lane, London, for possible inclusion in the volume?

MICHAEL MORLEY.  
School of Humanities, Flinders University of South Australia, Bedford Park, South Australia.

# Mockery and self-mockery

## Alan Jenkins

First Name: Carmen  
Chelsea Cinema/Camden Plaza

There are two indisputably good things about Jean-Luc Godard's latest film: one is the body of Maruschka Detmers (a very young-looking eponymous female lead), cruelly beautiful from top to toe; the other a ruefully funny performance by M Godard as himself, or perhaps a caricature of himself, a shell-shocked, haunted, mad and mumbling film director who has fallen out of favour with the industry and seeks peace or finance. He is brought out of hibernation in an asylum or nursing home by the blandishments of his niece Carmen, who proposes a "project", and the hard cash to back it, in return for the use of his empty Trouville apartment.

The cash, it transpires, is to come from a bank heist; the apartment is to be the *point de repère* for Carmen's gang of *cindaste*-terrorists; the film is a blind for a plot to kidnap some very rich, very important person. This politico-police melodrama is enhanced by the very dark eyes of Mlle Detmers, and their effect on the poor sucker she lures to destruction. Bank guard Joseph finds himself in close proximity to eyes, mouth and all the rest as he attempts to apprehend Carmen on the corpse-strewn floor of the raided bank and, making his existential leap, he sets off with her for Trouville (*amour fou*, complicity in crime, the devil to pay). The captor is soon captive to the body, the eyes, etc of Carmen, and she, flashing all of them for all they are worth, taunts him with his own obsession: "If I love you, you're finished, you know" is her modest prophecy. He knows, but the prospect doesn't look so bad when the girl is there, with very little on, in an otherwise empty room.

There is little or no trace of Bizet in the film, and very little of Merméide either, apart from the dark temptress, the animal passion she arouses in her man (played with animal vigour and apparent mindlessness by Jacques Bonnard), the inevitable end (here, tragi-comic). The rest is a watchable but not terribly memorable

# Sharpening the satirical scalpel

## Anthony Vivis

FRIEDRICH DÜRRENMATT  
*Acherloo*  
Schauspielhaus, Zürich

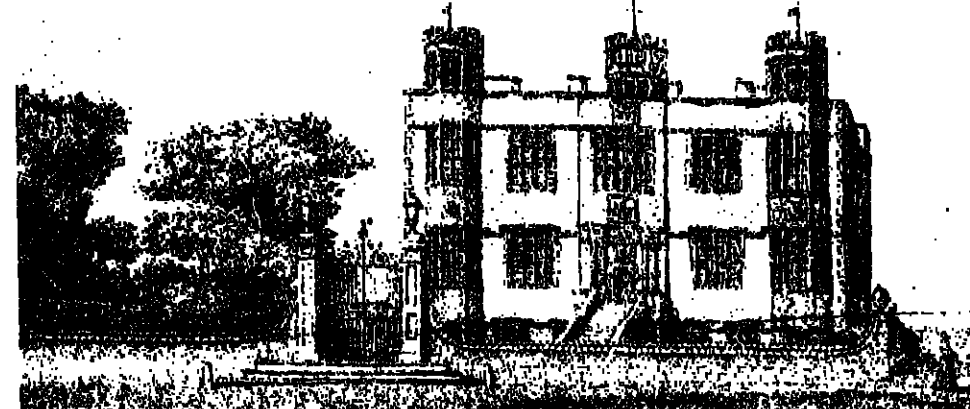
*Acherloo* is a historical comedy presented as a dramatic collage of elements that are given deliberately anachronistic treatment. The cast list includes Jan Hus, Cardinal Richelieu, Benjamin Franklin, Robespierre, Napoleon Bonaparte, Johann Christian Woyzeck and Karl Marx. The play is set "somewhere near Waterloo" in the present day. Its theme is "recent events in Poland".

Dürrenmatt's leading character is a Napoleonic figure who wears dark glasses and watches videos of actors playing heads of state; his favourite being Charles Boyer as Napoleon. The country he leads is a one-party state with a strong Roman Catholic Church. Economically and ideologically the country is under severe pressure: even a state-run girls' magazine, with an enormous circulation in East and West, fails to balance the books, and Hussite heretics agitate for free trade unions.

As a crisis approaches, the two super-powers seek to protect their political investments. Napoleon is inconveniently independent. Separately, they instruct double agent Joseph Pouché to have him murdered by the state barber, Woyzeck. Napoleon, however, appeals to Woyzeck's patriotism, and so he takes his razor to Pouché's throat instead. In desperation, the bosses at Party HQ send Robespierre, the Revolution's Mr Clean, to restore moral order. Unfortunately he is seduced by Marion (a character from another Büchner play to which Dürrenmatt gives the role of Woyzeck's daughter). The shock is too

chaos of half-formed thoughts and half-articulated feelings, casual violence, some very nasty types disdainfully going about their nasty work, and headlong lunges by a naked M Bonnard at the bobbing and weaving hallucination of a *Vogue*-clad, or unclad, Mlle Detmers. Godard as director outrageously indulges his ambivalent — sometimes defensively giggly, sometimes rage-and-hurt-filled — vision of the bitch-goddess, and as an actor permits himself the sybilline, ironic expression of some enduring, but by now also somewhat belated, imperatives on art, society, big business, films and so on. Shoot-outs, murder and mayhem, a girl who promises everything and gives you a pain in the head, mockery and self-mockery; we have been here before, and Godard knows it: that is part of the fun, or the irritation, depending on your point of view.

Against this parodic, stylized and often amusing burlesque are counterpoised, from time to time, the intent, calm lucidities of a musical rehearsal — of Beethoven quartets, by the Quatuor Prat (into whose number Claire is interpolated: Claire, the nice, serious, discarded girl trying to deflect the hand of fate from Joseph's head and heart); and the equally calm, equally lucid beauty of Godard's mature camerawork. Some of the shots are stunning; moments when music, frame and human intensity fuse — this happens, with some surprisingness, to the tune of Tom Waits's desolate



Barlborough, Derbyshire, a drawing of 1785 by Samuel Heironymous Grimm which can be seen in the exhibition *The Country House at the Christopher Wood Gallery*, 15 Motcomb Street, London SW1 until February 24.

much for Robespierre's ethical system. Napoleon next averts the threat of American "liberation", by showing Ambassador Franklin compromising photographs of him with Marion.

In a last-ditch attempt to preserve the status quo, Cardinal-Commissar Richelieu is asked to draw up a blueprint for a Catholic-Marxist State, but this is washed away by the militia's water-cannon. In order to avert a national strike which would give "them" a pretext to "march in", Napoleon has to ratify the existence of free trade unions. Having secured his rear, Napoleon goes on television to announce a military government of national salvation.

The second half of the play shows a struggle for the political soul of Europe which Dürrenmatt considers as important morally as the battle of Waterloo was militarily. It takes Karl Marx in person (or rather, three personae, which represent the theorist, the pragmatist and the freedom fighter) to convince Napoleon-Jaruzelski of the wisdom of restraint. He in turn uses Marion to persuade Hus-Walesa that home-produced tanks on the streets are preferable to imported ones. In a potent theatrical moment, the martyr-dissident sets fire to the hat, branded with a devil, which marks him out as a heretic. This evokes the defiance and martyrdom not only of a medieval religious outlaw, but also of a present-day political conformist.

Yet Dürrenmatt has two surprise endings in store. As a sign of solidarity with her people, Marion retaliates against exploitation by murdering the tyrant in bed. At this, a distraught figure in a white coat (played by Dürrenmatt himself on the first night) rushes in.

He apologizes that the inmates of his mental clinic at Acherloo, whose historical role-playing therapy we have been kind enough to

and desolating song "Ruby's Arms" — can make for powerful effects and affects, but Godard does not allow himself, or us, to glimpse this painful mystery (of irresistible sexual allure, of suffering-through-love) for long. We are soon back with jump-cutting from scene to scene, the jauntily off-hand awfulness of *actes* that are more or less *gratuits*.

The incoherence, bluster and confusion of the human *va-et-vient* were richer, more skilfully highlighted by the different richness and greater poise of great art, in *Passion* (though there was no passion in that film as great as Joseph's for Carmen in this); the desperate bid for freedom, the consequent "romantic despair" were more lightly and far less knowingly evoked in *Pierrot le fou* — here, the depths are reached when Joseph corners Carmen (fully naked, for once) in a shower, and masturbates over her ("Tu me dégoûtes", she comments; "Moi aussi", he concurs) some time before despatching her in an only marginally less risible struggle over a pistol; the anarchic absurdity of it all is a little tired. Worse, Godard's heart has been immeasurably more "in" other previous renderings of sexual attraction and destructiveness than it is in this glancing, sentimental-cynical, admittedly seductive succession of luxurious rooms through which he pursues, or rather is pursued by, the far from obscure object of dream and desire: a ridiculously lovely girl in small red knickers.

# Chivalry

## Harold Hobson

MADELEINE BINGHAM  
Sheridan and Eliza  
Olivier Theatre

Sheridan's *The Rivals* is one of the most popular plays in the Olivier's current repertory, and the National has had the happy idea of presenting, as a platform production, a short piece showing how the play came to be written. Madeleine Bingham's *Sheridan and Eliza*, directed by Giles Block, is, if anything, even more romantic than *The Rivals* itself, with songs and linking passages composed by Thomas Linley, the heroine's father, who followed the then humble profession of music teacher, and brought up Eliza to sing professionally, which she did very successfully in Bath and in oratorios at Oxford.

The Linley and Sheridan children became friends at an early age, without, however, Sheridan's father acknowledging any social equality between the two families. Ms Bingham's play is said to be adapted from original sources and letters. The letters are certainly in evidence, for Sheridan (Paul Stewart) and Eliza (Sabina Franklyn) write them furiously during a temporary tiff brought about by the elder Sheridan. Though Sheridan is supposed to be immured in Waltham Abbey reading law (which he did, in spite of his stricken heart, with such thoroughness that years later he was able to speak and argue sensationally enough to play a prominent part in the legal destruction of Warren Hastings), the letters of Sheridan and Eliza which are read aloud to us by Franklyn and Stewart are, on the stage, composed in the noble embrace of the great Bath crescent that the National has devised for *The Rivals* itself.

The original sources referred to in the programme are not, at any rate at first hearing, quite so obvious as the letters. In a long harangue at the beginning of the play Stewart recites all the facts that led up to the incident which is the most charming part of *Sheridan and Eliza*. That Eliza was pestered by a certain Major Mathews, and boldly invited Sheridan to escort her to France so that she might enter a convent; that Sheridan, once aboard, announced that for the sake of respectability, they must get married as soon as possible; that they did so in a church near Calais, but did not regard this ceremony as more than an engagement until it had been ratified in England (Sheridan, though one of the most piercing wits in the history of British comedy, was a tiger for the proprieties); that on their return to England, Sheridan fought and wounded the amorous major, and that his father declared that marriage with Miss Linley would be a disgrace and packed him off to Waltham Abbey with his law books: all these things Stewart reveals in a voice less like the tones of Sheridan the dramatist than like the sober prose of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, where in fact they are all to be found. The recital is relieved here and there by a pretty song delivered by Franklyn, and a little later Stewart (who hitherto, though gallant, has been somewhat dull in his pitiless recollection of facts easily to be found elsewhere) bursts into song himself, and proves to have a baritone voice of great beauty and sweetness.

But Bingham is not really concerned with duels or elopements or music; her interest is chiefly in chivalry. On the boat to France Sheridan had shown himself to be a man of rare delicacy, and it was this that made Eliza fall in love with him (they were both scarcely twenty years old) and marry him despite his being disinherited by his father. And, rather than let his wife undergo the disgrace of singing for money, Sheridan decides to earn some money himself. He quietly takes up a pen and writes, and the result is *The Rivals*. When first produced, *The Rivals* was a failure. But Bingham leaves us feeling that Sheridan was not only one of the greatest of dramatists, but also a very gallant gentleman.

The most recent publication in the Methuen/Royal Court Writers Series is Sarah Daniels's *Masterpieces* (35pp. £1.95. 0 413 3470 8).



## Post-war

### Malcolm Deas

**SIMON WINCHESTER**  
*Prison Diary, Argentina*  
219pp. Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press.  
£8.95 (paperback, £3.50).  
0701127481  
**CARLOS M. TÚROLO (Editor)**  
*Así lucharon*  
327pp. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana.  
95007093 X

"You must know that, as they say, our thoughts are with you. It's a poor phrase, but is literally true. Journalists have ephemeral concerns, and they're sentimental too. But we all share your frustration just a little. . . ." So writes one journalist to Simon Winchester, imprisoned in Tierra del Fuego for the duration of the Falklands War. Winchester attempts to make the best of his bad luck with *Prison Diary, Argentina*, an ephemeral, sentimental and frustrated book which demonstrates that by locking him up the Argentine authorities effectively prevented him from writing anything of lasting importance. The diary lacks the "How to deal with Argies" arrogance of the first article he wrote on his return. It shows a decent sense of proportion in everything except the decision to publish it.

Carlos M. Túrolo's *Así lucharon* collects accounts of their war in the islands from ten Argentine officers, the highest in rank captains. They are professional soldiers, and their reactions therefore lack some of the immediacy of those of the conscripts recorded in Daniel Kon's *Los chicos de la guerra*. They also seem to me to contain a deal of military special pleading: there is certainly not much complaining, and no criticism of superiors. The author has talked to men naturally anxious to give a good account of themselves, and the result is rather bland. As citizens of an experienced warlike nation, the British are most of us inclined to admit that we were won by the least dramatic route: the most efficient side, and that few activities offer greater scope for human error than war. The Argentines have not fought one for 120 years, and it shows. These representative younger officers strike one as somewhat naively anxious to explain that they remembered their training, that they went by the book, that they sometimes gave as good as they got, and that the experience of combat, and defeat develops feelings previously unsuspected. It would not have disgraced them to have been more frank about the reasons for failure.

The Argentines were impressed by our logistical superiority, particularly in helicopters, and by the accuracy of laser-guided artillery. The British civilian reader, skipping through accounts of skirmishes that, like most genuine accounts of skirmishes, convey little more than an impression of confusion, will find some arresting passages about the islands and about ourselves:

In the cathedral I was struck by the plaques that recorded the helpers who died in far off places in the British wars. I thought how they, who criticize us for fighting for two islands while we are in possession of a huge country, all the same themselves fought and died for an England that considered them second-class citizens. I thought too that I hoped our dead would have memorials in all our churches.

I had made a drawing of a cross and a helmet with a cross underneath. . . . This caught the attention of an English soldier, and he asked me for one like it. I drew a tomb again and this time with an English helmet. . . . The major said he would write the dedication. It said this: "In memory of all those brave soldiers who fought and died for King and Country in the wrong warlike, wrong place and fighting against the wrong enemy May God bless them." The soldier was very pleased with the picture. . . . He said he agreed with the dedication and was going to have it inscribed on his stomach, which was the only place he had free, as he was all over everywhere else at three o'clock.

"When one has been defeated, this officer goes on, 'and one is still alive, one has a sort of you can't call shame for being still alive, but a sort of feeling of spiritual obligation to point one's existence in a certain direction.' It is not too clear what is the immediate direction in which such soldiers will point. What is clear is that they all still hope to get the islands back some day.

## Making tracks

### H. S. Ferns

**COLIN M. LEWIS**  
*British Railways in Argentina 1857-1914: A Case Study of Foreign Investment*  
259pp. Athlone Press. £20.  
0485 177129

An important contributing factor in the present sorry state of Anglo-Argentine relations is ignorance and misinformation, as abundantly exhibited in London as in Buenos Aires. Neither here nor there can we find much evidence that those responsible for an unnecessary tragedy want to know any real facts about the long history of a free, friendly, and mutually beneficial relationship between Britain and Argentina.

Colin Lewis is one of those who believe that patriotic ignorance is not enough. His study of British railway-building in Argentina is a well-documented account of one of this country's contributions to the transformation of a primitive hunting and ranching community, run by a tyrant, into a civilized nation endowed with effective representative institutions and so productive that in 1939 Argentina ranked with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Switzerland as one of the wealthiest states in the world.

During the last days of the dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas, his ambassador in the United States, Carlos de Alvear, observed to his master that the United States at mid-century was undergoing an astonishing transformation, and that this was due to railway-building. When Rosas fell in 1852 his successors adopted what nowadays is called a "developmental strategy", a feature of which was railway-building. But how to go about this? Railways cost large amounts of money. They required for their building and operation technical expertise and a self-disciplined work-force. Trains do not naturally run on time, nor do they build themselves nor, in the 1850s, were engineers and investors attracted to a poor, thinly populated and disturbed country as Argentina then was.

In the establishment of railways there the British mercantile community played a significant part. Like the Argentine public authorities the British merchants and landowners believed that railways were essential for development. They were not interested in them as profitable investments, but as means of making their commercial and pastoral activities more profitable. Their essential contribution was to

## Peasants into proles

### George Philip

**FLORENCIA E. MALLON**  
*The Defense of Community in Peru's Central Highlands: Peasant Struggle and Capitalist Transition, 1860-1940*  
384pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£28.20 (paperback, £12.60).  
0691076278

The Peruvian Central Highlands have been as intensively studied as almost any region of Latin America. What has until now been lacking, however, is a serious history of the processes of economic and social transformation of the Valley since independence. This ambitious undertaking has now been completed, very successfully, by Florencia Mallon. It is not the least of the virtues of her book that it illuminates a number of themes other than the main one under discussion. There are some extremely interesting pages on the continuing conflicts in the region stemming from the War of the Pacific, and also a very full discussion, this time based largely on secondary sources, of the early behaviour of the Cerro de Pasco Company in Peru.

The main theme of the book, however, is the proletarianization of the peasantry of the region. Although the author is neither sentimental nor overtly ideological, the story she tells is one of the decline and fall of independent peasant communities with the advent of modern capitalism: an important sub-theme is the limited adaptation made by capitalism to local conditions and peasant communities

interest capitalists in Britain in investment in Argentina; no easy job, and yet a very necessary one because the people with investable surpluses in Argentina itself were very reluctant to put money into enterprises which necessarily were not immediately profitable and about which very little was known.

As it turned out the public authorities found three principal means of attracting capital to Argentina: by direct borrowing, by guaranteeing profits to investors, and by investing in the shares of privately owned railway companies. These methods of attracting capital lasted from 1857 until the Baring Crisis in 1890, and resulted in the construction of 2,943 miles of broad-gauge railway and 894 miles of standard and narrow-gauge. The merit of this tripartite policy was to initiate building; its demerit was the constant conflict of interest generated by the guarantees. Were railways being built to milk the public authorities of guaranteed profits or was their purpose to provide a public service? Dr Lewis has a lucid and telling chapter on guarantees, and the statesmanlike way in which the Argentine government brought the system to an end in 1894.

One of the fundamental myths of modern Argentine nationalism, established by Scalabrini Ortiz in the 1940s and 1950s, is that the railways were one of the British weapons of exploitation and control in Argentina. Lewis's study, which ends in 1914, at the height of Argentine prosperity, shows that the British-owned railways were not enormously profitable enterprises, nor were there many complaints about their charges, which were controlled by the Argentine Railways Board, or their services, which were continuously improved by fresh investment. The most successful, the Buenos Aires and Great Southern, paid its ordinary shareholders 10 per cent from 1883 to 1887, but these were exceptional dividends. For most of its history until 1914 it paid 7 per cent. The East Argentine, another British-owned road, never paid its shareholders a penny. Compared with railways in Britain the returns in Argentina were about the same: the BAGS performed ½ per cent better than the profitable London and North Western, and the Central Argentine not so well as the Great Western, which seldom produced more than 5½ per cent for its shareholders. Another comparison is possible: a farmer on the Canadian prairies before the First World War would have regarded British railways in Argentina as benign institutions compared with the Canadian Pacific or the Canadian Northern.

However, the trend over time was for capitalism increasingly to influence social life in the region rather than vice versa. Thus, for example, Cerro de Pasco began by meeting its labour needs from the unpopular *enganche* system of contracting, but soon afterwards found that its need for a stable supply of labour repaid the short-term costs of acquiring permanent workers who could be trained in a skill. In doing this, Cerro by-passed members of the local élite for whom *enganche* was a source of power and wealth. The move laid Cerro open to union activity and strikes but the onset of the 1929 Depression, when militants seriously overplayed their hands, allowed the company to purge and re-hire to its own satisfaction; unions did not re-emerge for another generation.

Perhaps Mallon stresses the logic of capitalism too much to the exclusion of other factors. In particular, population growth is mentioned several times but never seriously analysed and there are no detailed statistics. It may be that Matthus, as well as Marx, would have been familiar with the process being described. After all, the Lima élite, which was concerned in 1900 at labour shortages, had, by the mid-1930s, begun to worry seriously about being swamped by rural immigration.

This doubt aside, Mallon's account is generally convincing and certainly important. The book is well written and well researched - personal interviews provide some of the most interesting material. Further study of the Central Highlands, whose attractiveness to visiting scholars shows little sign of diminishing, will take its book as a point of departure.

## Peripheral developments

### Rosemary Thorp

**DAVID G. BECKER**  
*The New Bourgeoisie and the Limits of Dependency: Mining, Class, and Power in "Revolutionary" Peru*  
420pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£30.20 (paperback, £8.60).  
0691076456

The topic of this book is the interplay between the state, local entrepreneurial groups and the multinationals in the process of development. It takes a particularly interesting case-study: the Peruvian mining sector at a moment of great flux and experiment, during the years of military government, 1969-80. The book contains interesting empirical material on the negotiations between the State and the multinationals, the subsequent performance of the State companies, the composition, competence and ideology of the Peruvian private sector, the relationships between the State and the private sector, and the role of labour.

It is an extremely controversial book. Its framework is "openly revisionist" Marxist class analysis, rejecting determinism and "ideological orthodoxy". David G. Becker's main preoccupation is "to lay to rest" the ghost of the dependency school, interpreted as a line of analysis which simplistically lays all blame on the metropolis and refuses a priori to allow the possibility of capitalist development in the periphery, except in a distorted and dependent form. He considers that dependency writers neglect the degree to which the popular classes can win power even when exploited economically, and use it to modify the terms of that exploitation; this political dimension is a major focus of his own analysis.

One could wish, however, for a little less preoccupation with laying to rest an already pale and much-misunderstood ghost, and a little more open-ended exploration of his own data. The book reads at times like the work Becker is criticizing: just as dependency writers, or so he suggests, can see nothing positive in external links, so he, in reverse, can see nothing but good in national development. This is an unfair description, since Becker does point to weaknesses, but he allows himself to be carried beyond his evidence. Few economists, for instance, would be happy with his claim that Centromin, the Peruvian State company formed to replace Cerro de Pasco, is an "unequivocal success story". Dependency writers generalize too much, Becker argues; he, having pointed out that the State was able to develop its mining interests in an unusual vacuum provided by a temporary lack of interest among the multinationals, goes on to conclude in an extremely broad fashion that he has invalidated dependency propositions about the State.

No one sympathetic to the dependency approach will, of course, accept the version of it that the author is here attacking. Sophisticated exponents, such as Cardoso or Sunkel, were never as superficially deterministic as this version suggests. And at times Becker has the specifics wrong too: for example on technology. He claims that he is disproving "dependencismo" by showing that the State bought entire packages of technology not because local sources of technology and equipment did not exist but because it was the only way that financing could be secured. This is exactly what a "dependencista" would argue: historically, capacity was not lacking; it was simply not able to be drawn on because of "the system" - in this case financial needs.

None of this invalidates, however, the empirical contribution of the book, especially its interview material. And for all my disagreements with Becker, he makes some good analytical points. Useful distinctions are drawn, eg, between different kinds of multinationals. The important point is constantly made that the modus operandi of the international economic system is continually changing, as well as the level of development and capacity of local states, and he makes interesting suggestions as to the implications of recent changes. There will be plenty who disagree with the conclusions of the book - but they will learn from reading it.

## Clergyman and clown

### Denis Donoghue

**IRVIN EHRENPREIS**  
*Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age*  
Volume Three: Dean Swift  
1066pp. Methuen. £40.  
046854001

Irvin Ehrenpreis has trained his readers to be patient. When he published the first volume of his biography of Swift - *Mr Swift and His Contemporaries* - on August 23, 1962, he assured them that the two remaining volumes were "already complete in a preliminary draft", and that they would appear "in reasonably quick succession to the first". When the second volume - *Dr Swift* - appeared in 1967, he justified it as being the bulkier of the three "because it deals with the most interesting chapters of his life". He didn't comment on the delay between the two volumes. In the event, the third and final volume turns out to be far longer than the second, and the delay such as to merit a little explanation. Professor Ehrenpreis has indeed been busy on other projects. But I assume, too, that scholarly work on Ireland and on Swift's Irish years, such as Louis A. Landa's *Swift and the Church of Ireland* (1954), Oliver W. Fergusson's *Jonathan Swift and Ireland* (1962), and L. M. Cullen's *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660* (1972), has led Ehrenpreis to take a more detailed interest in this period than he had intended. So much the better. The social, economic and political history of Ireland in the first half of the eighteenth century is now more fully understood than it was when Ehrenpreis started his work twenty-five years ago.

The first volume of the biography dealt with Swift's early years: his birth in 1667, education at Kilkenny and, for whatever advantage he took of it, at Trinity College, Dublin; his career in the church, a first affair of the heart at Kilkenny, his years in service to Sir William Temple, and, some months after Temple's death on January 27, 1699, his move to Dublin as domestic chaplain to the Earl of Berkeley, Lord Justice of Ireland. The second volume brought Swift's story up to 1714: it included his polemical writings for the Tories, the complications of an emotional life involving Esther Johnson ("Stella") and Esther Vanhomrigh ("Vanessa"), the collapse of Swift's fortunes when Queen Anne died on August 1, 1714 and his patrons, Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, and Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, lost power and honour. Swift arrived in Dublin on August 24, 1714, and entered upon the long disease of his exile. The years of his greatest fame were 1724-25, when he triumphed as "M. B. Drapier", author of the *Drapier's Letters*, and 1726 when he published *Gulliver's Travels*. He died on October 19, 1745.

Ehrenpreis has also trained his reader to be astute. In the preface to the first volume he said that he was less concerned to add than to eliminate fables: "those readers who look for my views on a long train of legendary Swiftisms will search in vain". At the end of the final volume he claims that he has been as good as his first self-denying word. Scholarship, he says, "cannot hope to rival the dramatic narrative that Johnson and Scott have embedded in English literary culture", but "it can offer materials to those who would rather come near Swift himself than be entertained with fascinating legends". In this biography, he says, "neither Swift nor Stella is made a bastard; Swift does not say, 'My uncle gave me the education of a dog'; Dryden does not say, 'Could Swift, you will never be a poet'; and Temple does not seat Swift and Stella at the servants' table".

We can live agreeably enough without Swiftisms. Besides, some of them have already been set aside: it is thirty years since Maurice Johnson replaced Dryden's famous remark by a more benign piece of advice quoted from Clarendon's *Life of the Poet*: "Cousin Swift, turn your thoughts another way, for nature has never formed you for a Pindaric poet". But it does not follow that one comes near to Swift himself merely by eliminating episodes one regards as apocryphal.

Besides, some of the legends arise from a valid question: why didn't Swift and Stella marry? Or perhaps they did after all. Trying to answer the first question, Denis Johnston re-

vived, forty years ago, the old rumour that Swift and Stella were consanguineous. The early version of the rumour was that both of them were Temple's natural children. Johnston accepted the notion that Stella was Temple's daughter, and argued that Swift was the natural son of Temple's father, Sir John Temple. John Middleton Murry regarded this theory of Stella's origin as "not unreasonable", but rejected the recourse to Sir John, on the grounds that there was nothing peculiar to Swift in the connection with the Temples. "Swift's cousin, Thomas, was also protected by Sir William Temple; he served as chaplain-secretary at Moor Park during Jonathan's absence, and by Sir William's influence was pre-



sented to the near-by rectory of Euttenham. But the question of marriage remains. Ehrenpreis didn't offer any convincing comment on it in his second volume. It's not clear why Stella held back from marrying William Tisdall when he broached the question early in 1704; unless she lived in hope that Swift would marry her. Ehrenpreis's argument is that Stella didn't miss much by not marrying Tisdall - think of all those eighteenth-century pregnancies and deaths - and that she appreciated Swift's friendship too much to give it up for a mere Tisdall. But Ehrenpreis doesn't explain Swift's determination not to marry. It's not enough to say, as he does in the third volume, that "sexuality and marriage were not elements in Swift's scheme".

My own view is that the explanation began in Kilroot, when Swift proposed to Jane Waring ("Varina") and she dithered till he told her, in effect, to go to the devil. Or rather, he laid down such conditions that she couldn't win any show of dignity have accepted them. Ehrenpreis thinks that Swift was so taken with Stella at that point that he had quite lost interest in Varina and wanted to escape from his proposal. But I think Swift's letter of May 4, 1700 to Varina marks his determination never again to put himself in a vulnerable relation to any woman. A letter of extraordinary cruelty, it can be explained, I think, only as issuing from Swift's wounded pride: it put in formal terms his insistence on remaining forever independent of the women he cared for. "If my fortunes and honour served me to think of that state", he told Tisdall, "I should certainly, among all persons on earth, make your choice." The humour in question, I think, was defined once for all by his dealings with Varina.

Ehrenpreis's account of this question doesn't seem convincing. Swift "evaded marriage", he says, "in order to escape his father's rage: an untimely death, with the abandonment of a pregnant wife to the dependence of poverty". But that consideration didn't prevent him from courting Varina at a time when his fortunes were far lower than they were when Stella and Vanessa came into the matter. Swift had no reason to fear an untimely death; even if he couldn't bank on living, as he did, to the ripe old age of seventy-seven. Ehrenpreis is anti-

tical to believe that Swift never married Stella, and never had sexual relations with her. He concedes that it's impossible to prove these negative facts, but he stands by the arguments that there is no surviving document of the marriage, and that an unwitnessed ceremony would have been invalid. Stella always described herself as a spinster; "and of course she had nothing to gain from an unacknowledged, invalid marriage that left both of them living as celibate friends". Ehrenpreis puts great weight "on the language of Swift's letters to Sheridan and Stopford on Stella's approaching death, and on the language of the prayers he wrote for her". In these, Swift "could have avoided the issue but chose words that specified their connection as merely one of friendship". These are formidable considerations, but not decisive. The notion that Swift and Stella married in 1716 has strong credentials: it is mentioned, as Murry remarked, by Bishop Evans, Orrey, Delany, Deane Swift, Sheridan and Samuel Johnson. "Soon after (1716), in his forty-ninth year", Johnson said, "he was privately married to Mrs. Johnson by Dr. Ashe, Bishop of Clogher, as Dr. Madden told me, in the garden." In 1789 Monck Berkeley said that "in 1716 they were married by the Bishop of Clogher, who himself related the story to Bishop Berkeley, by whose relict the story was communicated to me". Some of these witnesses were indeed hostile to Swift; Evans and Johnson especially. Ehrenpreis regards Johnson's "Life of Swift" as a malicious document. But Ehrenpreis's arguments are not impeccable. The marriage wouldn't have been invalid, I assume, if it had been witnessed by the Bishop of Clogher. Stella wouldn't have thought it pointless since it would at least have ensured that Swift didn't marry anyone else, least of all Vanessa. Everybody agrees that even if the marriage took place, as Johnson says, it "made no change in their mode of life; they lived in different houses, as before". So it wouldn't have infringed Swift's resolution to keep himself independent of his women.

Those who believe in the marriage have the satisfaction of thinking that it makes sense of Swift's later dealings with Vanessa. They interpret the evidence as meaning that, a few months before she died in 1723, Vanessa discovered that Swift and Stella were already married. She wrote to Stella, demanding the truth. Stella passed the letter to Swift, and he roared defiance at Vanessa. Well and good: it is impossible to prove or disprove the interpretation. Ehrenpreis won't have anything to do with it; he thinks the evidence well enough explained by Vanessa's passion for Swift and by her having to suffer the pang of his neglect. But he makes one frightful suggestion, that Swift welcomed Vanessa's late illnesses and hoped she might die before becoming a nuisance. "Her bad health had a charm", he says, "beyond that of a mirror-image; for it meant that death might cut their tie before it grew intolerable." This is worse than anything Swift's enemies said of him. The only evidence Ehrenpreis offers is, in the next sentence, Swift's saying to Bolingbroke, six years later, "I never knew a very deserving person of that sex who had not too much reason to complain of ill health". Surely there is nothing in that remark except that good women are very often ill.

Then there is the question of Swift's insanity. Ehrenpreis doesn't want to believe it. He denounces as a lie Johnson's line in "The Vanity of Human Wishes": "And Swift expires a Driveller and a Show". Referring to the last five years of Swift's life, when he was hardly seen in public, Ehrenpreis says that "the myth of a demonic Swift was already passing into this world from the crooked inventions of remote tattlers". But some of the tattlers were not remote. Ehrenpreis refers to Charles Yorke's statement that Swift's madness "appears chiefly in most incessant strains of obscenity and swearing"; and to Yorke's informant, Thomas Birch, who said that "Dr Swift has lately awaked from a mere animal life into a thorough misanthropy and brutality of lust". Birch knew Johnson and gave him the terrible image of a Swift sunk in idleness. Ehrenpreis insists that the causes and symptoms of Swift's illnesses, in the last three years, were entirely physiological. In October 1742 he was in torment, suffering from orbital cellulitis, a dreadful swelling of

his left eye; later, he suffered lesions of the brain, and sank "into a motor aphasia". He lost the power of speech, so people thought him an imbecile. Ehrenpreis acknowledges that Swift couldn't look after himself, but he insists that he was always conscious. In 1750, as he reports, John Lyon, the clergyman who had been officially responsible for Swift during his years of incompetence, denied to Birch the story that Swift had been put on show for money by his servants.

The motive at work in Ehrenpreis's biography is, then, revisionism. It is clear that he regards earlier biographies of Swift as, in various degrees, lurid; and that he is especially disgusted by the assumption that Swift was a demented genius. So far as his own view of Swift has changed over the years, he now emphasizes Swift's normality: he accounts for the obscenity of the women-hating poems, for instance, by bringing forward a tradition of such writings. It is true that filthy poems were common in the eighteenth century than they are now: many of the motives that produced them are probably released now by looking through *Penthouse* and *Hustler*. Still, it's odd that Swift should have contributed so much to the genre: just as odd as it would be now, I suppose, for a clergyman to take out a subscription to pornographic magazines.

But the problem with Ehrenpreis's revisionist biography is that in making Swift appear normal it makes him not very interesting; not even very intelligent. More ordinary, yes, but not very bright. In the second volume Ehrenpreis argued that "the whole art of works like the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity* and *A Modest Proposal* depends upon the most exquisite of Swift's acts of impersonation, the case in which he parodies himself, or rather, in which the hidden comedian mimics the official priest; and his entire career can be described as the partnership of a clown and a preacher". This is well said, but it is compatible with evidence Ehrenpreis has also produced that Swift never did any hard thinking. Although he wrote many political pieces, he never understood the processes of government. He was attracted, in politics, toward particular men, but he didn't really know the rationale of their work. He was extraordinarily slow to realize what the Queen's death would mean; he underestimated the strength of the new men, the King's Whigs. He was culpably naïve in his relations with Oxford and Bolingbroke. As for his dealings with Stella and Vanessa: he treated Stella abominably, and Vanessa ineptly. Ehrenpreis says of his way with Vanessa that "if Swift was not always a myopic reader of men, his incompetence to handle those who engaged his most subterranean feelings is glaringly exposed in this case".

But it is not plausible that the straightforward man Ehrenpreis has described wrote *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*. Ehrenpreis says many splendid things about Swift, notably that "vicarious indignation is perhaps Swift's finest passion - the voicing of anguish over the oppression of people weaker than himself". In the third volume he says that in Swift's later years the object of his finest allegiance was "humble, productive humanity". He also remarks "the bitterness with which Swift's pride fought against his prudence". More doubtfully, Ehrenpreis argues that Swift didn't deliberately attach his mind to a party or his will to a patron; he might do so unconsciously, "but would not appear to". He wanted his patrons to appreciate him "for what he really had: wit and a conscience". These are examples of things well pondered; as in the second volume Ehrenpreis observed that "when Swift supported what we might call a side, he had to assert that it was the whole". But these perceptions, fine as they are when taken one by one, have the effect at last of making Swift appear a rather commonplace man in continuous if petulant possession of his experience. Coming to the end of the third volume, I recalled a passage from R. P. Blackmur's essay on D. H. Lawrence, in which Swift is named with several other writers - Webster, Donne, Sterne among them - who exemplified, in their different ways, "the deradicated, unsupported imagination, the mind for which, since it lacked rational structure sufficient to its burdens, experience was too much". It is understandable, perhaps, that Ehrenpreis

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should have wanted to remove from our sense of Swift whatever is lurid and melodramatic, but the cost of the removal is exorbitant. The impression Ehrenpreis leaves is that experience was neither too much nor too little for Swift, but just enough to keep him mostly exasperated. I don't quite believe it.

The first volume of the biography took Sir William Temple as its provoking figure: the second showed Swift immersed in daily politics on issues he understood only well enough for each local occasion. Oxford, Bolingbroke, and the Queen gave him whatever incitement he needed. In the third volume Swift is seen mainly in relation to Archbishop King. Ehrenpreis's account of the *Draper's Letters* is excellent, and it shows that King had already produced Swift's arguments about Wood's coinage, and thought of everything. What Swift produced was not the arguments for defeating the proposed coinage, but the ferocity for which the arguments offered a mere occasion. King didn't approve of the *Letters*, incidentally; he thought they flagrantly appealed to the mob, and to the spirit of the mob even in the gentlemen who read them. But he knew that their rhetorical force was remarkable.

Ehrenpreis makes much of King, and might have made more. A few years ago Andrew Carpenter quoted from King's unpublished papers in Trinity College, Dublin, a passage which we can hardly read without thinking it an immediate source of *A Modest Proposal*:

[The people of Ireland] have already given their bread, their flesh, their Butter, their Shoes, their stockings, their beds, their house furniture and Houses to pay their Landlords and Taxes; I cannot see how any more can be got from them except we take away their potatoes and buttermilk or flay them and sell their skins.

But King's urbanity held him back from the excesses which Swift saw no reason to resist.

Ehrenpreis claims to speak for scholarship and to disown all legendary obstacles. The claim is well justified. But once in a while he is negligent. For example, he refers to Swift's comment on the Nicene Creed, confession of the Trinity, as "a far-fetched, far-fetched, far-fetched note he says that Swift's tone here is ironic: 'Swift means it is foolish for a missionary to expect uninformed barbarians to grasp and be attracted to the creed; he is not commenting on the creed itself'. The disclaimer doesn't help. The Latin comment is one of Swift's marginalia to the seventh volume of Baronius's *Annales Ecclesiastici*, the 1612 edition. Herbert Davis first drew attention to it in a lecture at the Clark Library, and attached to it a wild surmise about Swift's religious beliefs. I argued in my *Jonathan Swift* (1970) that Swift's marginal note doesn't refer to the quoted Nicene creed but to the sentence preceding it in Baronius: "Firma fide credo et profiteor omnia et singula quae continentur in Symbolo fidei, quo sancta Romana Ecclesia utitur, videlicet: 'The theme is the return of the Russian Church to communion with Rome. Baronius gives the address of the Russian Hypatius to Pope Clement VIII. In the *Index to the Prose Writings* (1968) Ehrenpreis attached Swift's comment, in my view wrongly, to the first words of the Creed. If the comment refers, as I am pretty sure it does (the book is in Marsh's Library, Dublin) to the preceding sentence, it means that Swift is sneering at the Russian Church, abject now in its belated grovelling before Rome. Swift's 'fidel' is parodying Hypatius's 'fide' and 'fidel'. It has nothing to do with missionaries, or indeed with Swift's view of the Nicene Creed.

It is a scholarly reader who seems to be addressed in this biography. An occasional thought is welcome to any reader only a church would hold out against Ehrenpreis's remark about Swift and King, that "if it took three years of Irish Whiggery to make their sympathies bloom, it was not for want of verbal tokens of the Archbishop's part". But Ehrenpreis has turned his warmest smile, from the start, upon learned readers. A passage in the first volume discouraged any reader who could not hold in his head the differences between Scribanism, Unitarianism and Trithemism. Stephen Nye, a Hertfordshire parson, Ehrenpreis reported, "made propaganda for the Unitarians, called also Socinians; William Sherlock, Unitarian, to vindicate the doc-

trine of the Trinity, found himself accused by Robert South of Trithemism; whereupon Nye charged South with Sabellianism." In the third volume, commenting on the epistolary styles of Swift and Vanessa, Ehrenpreis says that "while she could use language like Pope's *Eloisa*, he often sounded less like Abeldard than St. Jerome (writing to Eustochium)". Will many of his readers recognize the sound, or distinguish it from Jerome's sound when he writes to other people?

But Ehrenpreis's ordinary style is appropriate to his revisionist plan. For the most part, he writes sentences which appeal to a common, uncluttered sense of life. He has not gone into any elaborate theory of biography. It is surprising to find him claiming, or confessing, that "much of my discussion of Stella and Vanessa is speculation based on Freudian psychology or on inferences drawn from a few data". Freudian motifs or paradigms are not very noticeable in the book, presumably because they are now so thoroughly assimilated that it is hard to recognize them for what they are. But there is a sharp moment in the first volume when Ehrenpreis rounds upon Norman O. Brown for saying that "Swiftian psychoanalysis differs from the Freudian in that the vehicle for the exploration of the unconscious is not psychoanalysis but wit". I find Brown's remark well worth making, and not at all incompatible with Ehrenpreis's, that Swift's meaning "is not that anal preoccupations supply the energy for our loftiest principles but simply that the holder of lofty principles must not suppose they free him from the body".

In any case, there are no anal preoccupations in the third volume. A Freudian flurry disturbs one page of commentary on Swift's birthday-poem for Stella in 1723, but Ehrenpreis smiles it away by calling it far-fetched. Apart from that, nothing in the biography has been fetched noticeably far. After many years in which biographies have been animated by theories not only far-fetched but far-fung, Ehrenpreis continues to believe in historical fact and judicious inference. One may be content with that, so far as the plan goes. But there is a feeling that by assimilating Swift to his time, Ehrenpreis has made him coincide with it. Without wishing to see Swift removed from historical conditions or presented as an unmediated figure or a freak of nature, I think his relation to historical conditions was wilder, more bizarre, than Ehrenpreis has allowed. It is not a choice between fact and legend. But the legends that have attached themselves to Swift are true in an arcane sense; they testify that he doesn't entirely coincide with his time and place: there is a remainder, not indeed fulfilled in the legends but resorting to a legendary form in the absence of any other embodiment. I don't know any theory of biography that would accommodate such a floating sense: the available versions lend themselves to domestication, even when they claim to affront it. Ehrenpreis's method is none the worse, for being old-fashioned: unless one could think of an alternative method and trust it to sense, a relation between what can be explained, in such a life as Swift's, and what baffles every such explanation. What we seem to need is a biography which would, in all the zeal of its elucidations, allow for the missing that, in Swift's bizarre case, should qualify them.

A footnote or two. Some readers of the two earlier volumes have regretted the lack of an index: the third volume provides an elaborate one which will satisfy everybody. My relation to it has been unfortunate and probably eccentric. Out of ten entries I have checked, two are inaccurate. One of these seems to amount to a vendetta. In the *Index to the Prose Writings* Archbishop King's dates are given as 1650-1720; the letter should read 1729 (he died on May 8, 1729). The same error is repeated now in the cumulative index at the end of the third volume of the biography. Very odd, since Professor Ehrenpreis gives the correct date of King's death in the narrative as it arises. The only misprint I have noted in the text itself is on page 389, where Swift's last letter to Vanessa is dated 7-8 August 1723: it should be 1722. It should also remark that the book is beautifully produced, the print elegantly readable, the paper far superior to that of the first and second volumes.

## The tortuous Tory

Paul Langford

F. P. LOCK  
*Swift's Tory Politics*  
189pp. Duckworth. £18.  
0715617559

Swift's politics are a large subject and this is a far from large book. However, F. P. Lock has already devoted an earlier work to the politics of *Gulliver's Travels*, and in any case the intention of the present study is plainly to suggest lines of thought rather than to provide a detailed survey of Swift's political career and writings.

In this light it has much to commend it. Here is none of the risible Freudianism occasionally provoked in Swift's commentators by the seamy side of his verse and by the supposed suppressed sexuality of his personal relationships. Nor will the reader be irritated by the crude cyphers frequently employed to crack Swift's alleged political codes. The author moves easily among the complexities of post-Revolution politics, displaying his familiarity with an extensive historical literature. He has read Beddard and Bennett on the ecclesiastical reaction of the 1680s. He understands the interminable controversy about the ideological consequences of what happened in 1688. He is capable of employing the psephology of W. A. Speck and Norma Landau to elucidate Augustan and early Georgian politics. The analysis is necessarily selective but it has much that is fresh about it. Particularly interesting is his discussion of Swift's lavish praise of the non-juring Archbishop of Canterbury in the puzzling but engrossing "Ode to Sanerok". Swift accepted the Revolution with his head but had doubts about it in his heart. Like many other churchmen he revered the non-jurors as heroes whose virtue exceeded their prudence; he applauded, without wishing to imitate, their ideological purity. The ode contains little hint of the intellectual embarrassment which might be thought to go with such views, and Dr. Lock offers a plausible explanation of the ways in which potential contradictions might be painlessly resolved.

His concern with some of the lesser known

texts of the 1690s is no coincidence, for one of the central aims of this book is to restore to Swift's somewhat battered reputation its distinctively Tory credentials. Prevailing interpretations tend to place Swift primarily with the formidable array of intellectuals which deplored so many of the new developments of the early eighteenth century and led the onslaught on Robinoocracy in the 1720s and 1730s. Who now does *not* read Bolingbroke? Swift's denunciation of commercialism and corruption can readily be enlisted beneath the banner of the *Craftsman*, and his scepticism neatly categorized as part of what it has become customary to label the civic humanist tradition.

Lock does not attempt a frontal attack on this orthodoxy, but he does stress aspects of Swift's thought which do not look well beside the libertarianism of the "real Whigs". There is a good deal of authoritarianism in Swift's Brobdingnag, not least in the King's views on religious minorities, and the value of an incorruptible but inequalitarian hierarchy is emphasized in all four parts of the *Travels*. Such evidence carries weight, but whether Lock completely succeeds in drawing coherence from his subject's tortuous political career is debatable. Nor is it altogether certain that the search for consistency should take such precedence. The fact is that the half century spanned by Swift's adult life was one of exceptional flux and turbulence. His apparently eccentric progress from country Whig to Williamite courtier, and then again from High Tory to country patriot, seems less unnatural when it is recalled that rapid political change put immense strains on personal consistency and that party, for all its fury, was too new and too superficial to take priority over all other considerations. Swift was manifestly influenced by interest and by anger, as well as by an internally flawless creed. In particular, his own circumstances after 1714 surely have more to do with the twin triumphs of the *Draper* and *Gulliver* than any long-standing, overriding purpose.

Dr. Lock has an engaging but far from excessive sympathy with his subject; if, in the last analysis, his portrayal does not completely convince, it is a measure of its scholarly and skilful execution that so many of the features are recognizable, and so many of the insights striking.

## Poets' propaganda

Nicholas Canny

JAMES P. MYERS (Editor)  
*Elizabethan Ireland: A Selection of Writings*  
by Elizabethan Writers on Ireland  
261pp. Camden, Conn: Archaic Books. \$22.50.  
0208 020349

The early modern centuries of Irish history which had lain dormant for almost half a century have recently come to life, and we have witnessed over the past decade a regular stream of monographs, articles and theses devoted to the study of various aspects of political and social developments in Ireland during the period.

But, as with all subjects that suddenly command attention, writers have been attracted whose enthusiasm exceeds their discretion. The most recent reprint to these ranks is James P. Myers, Jr., whose *Elizabethan Ireland* serves only to identify a task that should be undertaken by somebody more scholarly than himself. The essential problem is that Myers permits his prejudices to influence his judgment and his selection from the published work of the better-known Elizabethan and Jacobean authors on Ireland is intended to provide support for what he describes as his "theories" on the Irish historical experience. Myers's basic theory, as it appears from the potted history of Ireland that serves as an introduction to this book, is that the physical condition of Ireland provides a "fundamental appeal to the human need for freedom", and that "the Irish people" are "impressionable, hungry for freedom, lie at the root of their persistent rebelliousness and helps us to explain why, in the end, the irrepressible Irish spirit defeated England's superior material culture". The Elizabethan conquest of Ireland is, in the opinion of Myers, of particular importance to this pre-determined scheme,

and he asserts that "many of the difficulties that today beset Ireland in general and Ulster in particular may in fact be traced to the views and analyses to which the Elizabethan writers gave currency."

It must be said in favour of Myers that he is nothing if not well-meaning towards the Irish people, and he sees it as his special mission to unmask those apparently "gentle poets" of the Elizabethan and Jacobean decades who were in fact "government collaborators" who "contributed to the extensive propaganda war being waged by the Crown, many advocating programmes far more severe than the government was willing to adopt, at least openly". The most severe of these measures identified by Myers was genocide itself, and the selection presented from Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596), is designed to illustrate that this was indeed the author's purpose.

These endeavours of Myers would be laudable if the selections from the text were a fair representation of the whole, but it will be evident to anybody who has read it in its entirety that Spenser rejected categorically a policy of genocide - or the policy of the baltor as he termed it - in favour of a series of draconian measures designed to achieve the reform of the Irish population in religion and civility.

The fact that this fundamental truth escaped the attention of Myers erodes any confidence we might have in this selection from this or any other text, and one can only hope that this signal failure will inspire somebody else to do better. In doing so one would also hope and expect that any editor would see fit to include extracts from the writings of the unpublished, or lesser-known authors such as Edmund Tremayne, Andrew Trollope and Richard Beacon as well from the well-known texts of Derricke, Spenser, Rich. Morison *et al* represented in this anthology.

## By due process and by persuasion

Leslie Scarman

S. S. ATIYAH  
*Law and Modern Society*  
158pp. Oxford University Press. Paperback, £3.95.  
019 2891529

The Oxford University Press has done well to publish this brief, lucid and stimulating appraisal by P. S. Atiyah of English law as it operates in our society today. And it is refreshing to find that Professor Atiyah describes the law in action before he asks his questions. His study is critical, but not damning. Unlike many who write on the subject, he recognizes that a system of law and of legal institutions which has survived in its essential features for some 700 years, during which time the nation it serves has moved from a rural society of 1 or 2 million inhabitants to a highly complex urban and industrial society of more than 40 million, cannot be dismissed merely as "elitist", class-ridden or outworn. ("Elitist", I suspect, is current jargon for class privilege.)

Atiyah has more serious business on hand than to indulge in that sort of talk. Though he is careful to avoid thrusting forward his personal views, I suspect that he and I do not differ very greatly as to the role which law can play in a civilized society. The key to his thinking is to be found in two chapters: Chapters Three, "The purposes of law", and Four, "The legitimacy of law". He asks two fundamental questions. Does law have any purposes? Does legitimacy matter? By legitimacy he means the assent and acceptance by society of the law. In framing his question, he is not using the term in its other and technical meaning - the formal legitimacy of a rule derived from a judicial precedent or an Act of Parliament. Not the least merit of his little book is that he describes the law in action in such a way as to enable his reader, whether lawyer or not, to understand the critical importance of both questions to the survival in our society of the "rule of law". (If Atiyah will allow me to use a term which he does not like).

His chapter on "purposes" is negative in character. He assembles a formidable array of arguments against the proposition that the law has a social purpose other than to serve as an instrument or tool for the enforcement of social purposes conceived outside the law, ie,

the policies and thinking of those who have the power to make law. The common law appears at first sight to pose a difficulty. Is it not the law's own creation? Is it not judge-made law? Atiyah recognizes, of course, that English law is derived from two sources - the judges and Parliament. But he makes two points: the first is that Parliament can overrule judges but the judges cannot overrule or reject enacted law; and the second is that judicial attitudes and their approach to legal problems are determined not by ideas originating within the law but by what he describes as the liberal and highly individualistic outlook of the judges, which, derived from their own upbringing and education, originates not from within the law but from their social background and traditional values. It follows, if the analysis be correct, that Parliament is the ultimate arbiter of the purposes to be served by the law and that judge-made law, to the extent that it enjoys a degree of independence from Parliament, is itself as much a product of social forces as is legislation.

After citing a number of purposes which those "who make and enforce the law" can require the law to serve, Atiyah comments: "It is easy to conclude . . . that the law is not an independent autonomous institution with purposes of its own; but . . . merely a tool, an instrument by which policies and goals otherwise decided upon can be arrived at by those who make and enforce the law."

Even if the common law is to be classified as serving general purposes created within the law, it is itself subject to abrogation or amendment by Parliament and so cannot falsify the conclusion.

There follows a brief, but vivid, sketch of the Marxist analysis of law, which leads on to a discussion of various ways in which lawyers and philosophers have sought to establish that law has "purposes of its own". Atiyah leaves these arguments looking very sad indeed - save only for the concept of "due process of law", by which is meant not what decisions are reached by the law but how they are reached. The law's autonomous social contribution, he suggests, is not in its substance, which enters the law from outside (eg, from the world of morals, politics, economics, finance), but in the fair and just procedure which the law requires to be followed before a decision enforceable against a citizen can legally be made. "Lawyers are not telling governments and parliaments what they

must do, but only how they must do it."

Due process apart, where then has the law acquired the purposes which it is designed to serve? If Chapter Three contains the final answer, it must be from the traditional values of the common law, which is judge-made law developing slowly over the centuries from one judicial decision to another and reflecting the liberal individualistic views of the judges brought up in its tradition, and from legislation. Atiyah, however, makes the very interesting comment: "So a bias in favour of traditional individualistic values and goals may well be inherent in the litigation process, and may even be a desirable counterweight to the generality and abstractness of legislation." But (he implies, correctly) Parliament is ultimately the supreme arbiter of the law's substance.

The analysis in Chapter Three of the purposes of law is, I think, sound as far as it goes. But it is not the whole picture of the law, as the reader will perceive as soon as he turns to Chapter Four on "The legitimacy of law". In some fifteen pages the reader will here find a fascinating discussion of the moral foundations of law. The argument is developed that its legitimacy depends upon the law's protection of certain rights and freedoms fundamental to man, irrespective of whether they enjoy the support of those who are in a position to make laws. The suggestion is that unless the law offers a sure protection of these rights and freedoms, it will lose its legitimacy, ie, its hold upon the loyalty of ordinary men and women.

The theory of English law is otherwise. English law recognizes only the formal legitimacy of the law. Under the British Constitution an Act of Parliament (subject to the question mark posed by our membership of the EEC) is sovereign: ie, it is the duty of the courts, and of the rest of us, to comply with it. The positivist view of law, which limits legitimacy to its formal aspect, has gained adherents in Britain because of the constitutional doctrine of the sovereignty of Parliament. Under our constitution the judges cannot assert the inviolability of fundamental human rights (eg, freedom of speech, the right to a private life, the right to elect the government) against the enacted will of Parliament.

But there is an older British tradition which refused to accept that law can be emptied of its own distinctive moral content, and which saw its legitimacy to depend upon its protection of

human rights. It is the tradition, as Atiyah reminds us, embodied in the work of John Locke, whose views inspired the American constitution and led to the incorporation within it of the Bill of Rights, which American judges have developed by judicial interpretation into an integral feature of the common law in the US. It is significant that now, at the end of the twentieth century, the constitutional protection of human rights entrusted to the courts by a Bill of Rights is a feature of the law not only in the US but in many Commonwealth and other common-law countries. Indeed, Britain is one of the few exceptions. But it may not be for long: we may soon have to make a choice. We can retreat into our island, resisting (if we can) all outside influences. But we may decide otherwise, and, if we stage no such retreat, the result could be that it will be the doctrine of Parliament's unlimited legislative sovereignty which will have to give way, as being insufficient to satisfy the needs and aspirations of our people. The Common Market, the existence in international law of instruments such as the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (which the United Kingdom has ratified), the likelihood of devolution within the Kingdom, the possibility of a single-chamber government, the need to protect minorities (and sometimes majorities) who do not enjoy political power, point to the existence of a need for new constitutional powers to be entrusted by Parliament to the judges. We shall need a law whose legitimacy can be shown to derive from its ability to protect even against the legislature the human rights of all citizens: for this alone will ensure that the law continues to command that "persuasive power" over people's minds which, as the author perceives, is in the long run its only sanction.

Though Atiyah is careful not to state his own position and sensibly emphasizes that without judges educated by training and experience to handle and develop constitutional safeguards a Bill of Rights is unlikely to achieve its purpose, I find the conclusion to be drawn from his reasoning inescapable. It points to the need for constitutional reform. Atiyah leaves it to his readers to decide what they want. It is good, therefore, that the book is designed to be read by all who are interested; that it is written in a style which all can appreciate; that it is brief; and that it is modestly priced.

votes a chapter to the jury system, complaining about interferences with its exercise and concluding that it remains "a basic safeguard against abuse of power". Then, in a later chapter on racism, he notes that when dealing with cases of incitement to racial hatred "juries have reflected the wider racism infecting society as a whole".

Hain concludes that in "political trials" defence lawyers too often present conventional legal arguments in the absence of an "openly political stance" which would, he says, better serve their clients. Those with greater experience of courts would argue that conventional legal tactics are more likely to succeed than political appeals. Radicals should not give up the legal ground to the State. Treasury Juniors and Crown Prosecuting Counsel by no means win all the cases they argue. A legal system does not necessarily operate to preserve the status quo. It can, as shown by the constitutional law of the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Warren in the 1950s and 1960s, act as a powerful agent for social reform. It is remarkable that in a book devoted to the excesses and abuses of power by the State and its servants, Hain does not once mention the fetters imposed on State action by the European Convention on Human Rights as administered by the legal system in Strasbourg. In many of the areas he discusses, including the treatment of immigrants and prisoners, the law of contempt of court, and policy in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom has been required to amend its practices because of decisions of independent judges that it is in breach of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Convention. "Political trials" are not always incompatible with the furtherance of basic human rights.

## By power of discretion

David Pannick

PETER HAIN  
*Political Trials in Britain*  
318pp. Allen Lane. £12.95.  
07139 13398

The connections between law and politics are as difficult to define as those between law and morals. Stalinist show trials in which law is sacrificed to the political objectives of the State do not exhaust the circumstances in which the application of law in court has consequences for the nature of society. It is the thesis of Peter Hain that the independence from politics claimed for our legal system is grossly exaggerated and that the legal system operates, in practice, to support and maintain conservative values.

Any legal system creates wide discretionary powers for its agents. Jeremy Bentham emphasized that "the power of the lawyer is in the uncertainty of the law". Hain presents a well-documented argument that this discretionary power is exercised by the police, prosecuting authorities, magistrates and judges as a weapon to intimidate, discredit and exhaust those who "threaten the social and political status quo". In official secrets cases, the full weight of the law is used against junior staff accused of "leaking" embarrassing documents but not against Anthony Blunt or senior officials who "brief" respectable journalists. Conspiracy cases, such as the *Oz* trial, effectively leave the defendants for their life-styles and opinions. Broad public-order offences are used against demonstrators but not against equally disruptive football crowds. Through a panoply

of devices, from jury-vetting to binding over innocent people to keep the peace, the legal system, says Hain, asserts its own political values.

The US Supreme Court judge, Benjamin Cardozo, reminded us that "the great tides and currents which engulf the rest of men do not turn aside in their course and pass the judges by". Judges, magistrates, prosecutors and the police are all part of society, with prejudices and preconceptions like the rest of us. It would be surprising, perhaps even disconcerting, if they were able to immunize their official conduct from the set of values by which they live. Given that those who exercise such official power tend to come from a narrow spectrum within society, it is to be expected that they will have similar values and will show little understanding of, or sympathy for, persons who they perceive - often without justification - to be a challenge to their way of life.

Hain's analysis is convincing, if hardly original, in its presentation of the potential for bias in the application of discretionary powers. Where he is less persuasive is in the conclusions he draws as to the scope of the problem and the remedies which are needed. He too often ascribes to the temptation of treating the outcumbs to the application of the law as typical of all judges, which they are not. He indulges in a number of exaggerated assertions which devalue the more moderate case which would attract widespread support. Hain is unlikely to persuade anyone but the already committed that "the constitutional fiction of democracy bears precious little resemblance to the reality of an elitist secretive State", that "womanhood itself is politically on

trial all the time women come up against a legal system which reflects a dominant male culture", that in recent years "judges saw their duty as being to defend their class in its hour of need", or that "the police have been given a legal *carte blanche* to harass the black community". Many people who wish to see the liberalization of our official secrecy laws and improvements in legal attitudes to women, trade unions and blacks will find these claims ridiculous.

For Hain "one key problem is the almost complete lack of parliamentary control over the judiciary, the police and the security services". He does not offer any remedies. With regard to the judiciary, many of the problems which cause him concern could be resolved by appointing more women and blacks to the Bench, by more training for judges, by a Parliamentary Committee to vet senior appointments to the Bench and by a Judicial Performance Commission (the motto of which would be Samuel Johnson's dictum that: "a Judge may grow unfit for his office in many ways") to investigate complaints about judicial behaviour. In the US these mechanisms have helped to ensure that judicial independence is not treated as an excuse for judicial intolerance, incompetence and insularity.

There is a major problem in securing democratic accountability of magistrates, police chiefs and other officials who exercise wide discretionary powers. These officials often have similar prejudices, for example about blacks and demonstrators, and similar views on the role of women to the local communities they serve. Fundamental rights sometimes need as much protection from democratically elected officials as they do from bureaucrats. Hain does not appreciate the problem; he de-

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# Certain disappointments

Judith Davies

GIACOMO LEOPARDI

Moral Tales

Translated by Patrick Creagh  
265pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £9.95.  
085635 4201

Leopardi's *Operette morali* are not really "tales" at all, but dialogues and fables, mostly written in 1824, in which the poet worries away at what for him was a central problem of existence: the inclusion in the human package of a desire for happiness which is both infinite and destined to perpetual disappointment. He is sharply satirical when he contemplates the anthropocentric view of creation which he saw as characteristic of contemporaries. In "The Dialogue of an Inp and a Gnome" he momentarily inhabits the body of a lizard or a fly in order to conclude that they too doubtlessly "think that the whole world was made specially for the use of their species". A typically dizzying change of perspective produces the almost gleefully savage comedy of "The Dialogue of Nature and an Iceclander", in which Nature is conceived as a chillingly absent-minded mother-figure, who coolly pronounces the life of the universe "a perpetual cycle of production and destruction" created without any particular attention to the specific needs of men. At other times the irony is gentler and the mood more resigned; and the most sombrely materialistic of the *opere* – the ones that foreshadow the terrifying visions of pointlessness and pain contained in the *Zibaldone* of 1826 and after – are not necessarily those composed last.

The *opere* are not systematic philosophy.

Their irony makes for complexity rather than overall clarity, and some of it derives from the interactions of one *opere* with another. Once you have learnt the fate of the Iceclander, say, Aurelius' paeon to providential nature ("In Praise of Birds") will tend to strike a Panglossian note. Or, at the very least, his lyricism will be tinged with the pathos of human self-delusion.

So the style of these pieces varies from the informality of "The Dialogue of an Almanac-Pedlar and a Passer-by" to the aggressive colloquialism of Death in "The Dialogue of Fashion and Death"; but in parody in "Announcement of Prizes Offered by the Academy of Sillographers" to the sustained, discursive idiom of Leopardi's grand, opening fable, "The History of the Human Race". But on the whole the *opere* establish what Walter Binni has called "un tono medio di base", adapted to explorations which are intellectual as well as artistic. The speculative tenor of the writing is never long in reasserting itself, even where characterization is most robust.

Patrick Creagh says little about the task of translation, though he points out that Leopardi's "use of language" is "intricate" and his punctuation "weird". He is probably right: where the ironies are less a matter of style than of concepts and their interrelations, and stylistic variation is carefully controlled, it is the complexity of Leopardi's sentence-structure that is likely to prove the major hazard. Leopardi's convolutions are "in period", but also uniquely his, the sign of a restless intellect that refuses consoling conclusions. Earlier translations by James Thomas in 1906 and more recently by Iris Origo went out of their way to steer the English reader safely through

the argumentation. Something perhaps was lost. But I am not entirely convinced that Creagh was right to surrender unconditionally to the original. He is oddly unskillful with the *tanto . . . quanto* construction; and it is hard to know what to make of the almost comically Latinate "But Jove from past events having become aware of the true nature of men . . .". The absolute construction Leopardi employs is, in fact, elegant and still current in Italian. And where the eccentricities of Leopardian punctuation are concerned, consistency of reproduction can be an unforgiving virtue. After a hundred pages, the semi-colon between subject and verb still produces a jolt: "All of which discomforts, in a life that is always one and the same, stripped of any hope or desire whatever, and almost any other concern, than to be peaceful; come to be of no little moment . . .".

As everybody knows, to be faithful to the original is not always the same thing as being true to it.

Faithfulness, anyhow, is preferable to gratuitous inventiveness; and this translation has not only accuracy but courage to recommend it – all the translator can do, after all, is "hope" that the reader will "get used to" Leopardi's idiosyncrasies. It is a hope, one senses, nurtured in respectful – but not indiscriminate – admiration. The explanatory portions of this volume are written with informality but perceptiveness. Certainly Patrick Creagh communicates his own enthusiasm for a man of "terrible courage and vitality" whose life may have been wretched, but whose "intellectual and spiritual experience" were "glorious"; Leopardi, as he says, "may have despaired, but he never gave up".



A photograph from *The Other Italy* by David Price and Gotthard Schuh (80pp. The Olive Press, 30 Pembroke Road, London E17. £3.50, 0 946889 01 5).

## Acquisitively inquisitive

Z. G. Barański

MARIA CORTI  
*La Felicità mentale: Nuove prospettive per Cavalcanti e Dante*  
172pp. Turin: Einaudi. L. 16,000.  
8 806 05628 8

In her excellent new book, *La Felicità mentale*, Maria Corti suggests that in his maturity Dante "raised . . . himself above the ideological struggles, plumped for reason at the service of faith in the balance of Thomist and Franciscan, Aristotelian and mystical suggestions". This process, part obviously of a much broader reassessment of his ideas undertaken by the poet in exile, is apparent in Book IV of the *Convivio*, the *Comedy* and the *Monarchia*. The extent of Dante's reading, and the precise chronology of his intellectual formation are uncertain not least because in his works the poet endeavoured to present such matters in terms of an ideal and exemplary development. Furthermore, much research still needs to be done on the ways in which Dante absorbed other texts into the fabric of his own writing.

In recent years, Corti's work has been the highest and most innovative in this area of Dante studies. She has rediscovered, in the 1290s and early 1300s, an intellectually inquisitive young poet, open to the influence of the latest cultural findings and ready to employ them in his own compositions. The conventional picture of a Dante wedded from his earliest years to Christian orthodoxy, and particularly to Thomism, long questioned by some scholars, vanishes completely in Corti's inter-

pretation. She argues that, at least until Book IV of the *Convivio* written in the mid to late years of the first decade of the fourteenth century, rather than Aquinas, Dante preferred to listen to Albertus Magnus and the mystics and, like many of his contemporaries, was fascinated by the secularizing power of the recently disinterred Aristotle and the trend towards a purely "human" knowledge, the bearer of happiness on earth.

In her final chapter, Corti demonstrates the practical effect of these interests. When Dante came to write the first three books of *Convivio* he tried to bring about a synthesis between religious and lay values, his fundamental sources being Albertus Magnus's commentaries on Aristotle's *Ethics* and Brunetto Latini's *Treasure*. Corti charts with great care and sophistication the presence or absence of these works in the *Convivio*, discussing the different structures into which the borrowings are integrated and the different epistemological and artistic aids to which they are put.

In the final pages of *La Felicità mentale* Corti suggests new datings for several of Dante's works; and she resurrects the theory that the *Vita Nuova*'s final chapters were added about ten years after the composition of the rest of the work in 1292-3, so that it could fit in better with the *Convivio*. Although she is careful to put forward these proposals as hypotheses, I am not persuaded that the new evidence she presents significantly affects established positions. However, minor reservations should not detract from the achievements of this fine book, particularly as in her opening chapter Corti offers a convincing interpretation of *Dolce vita* pre-

## The third way in Spain

Martin Blinkhorn

SHLOMO BEN-AMI  
*From Above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923-1930*  
64pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.  
019 8225962

The dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera has been little studied by historians. Shlomo Ben-Ami's exhaustively researched and constantly stimulating study is therefore both welcome and important. Ben-Ami examines the dictatorship not only in its Spanish context but also in relation to other southern and eastern European dictatorships of the 1920s and 30s, with particular stress on Italy. Primo's coup of September 1923, he rightly asserts, occurred in response not, as its apologists claimed, to parliamentary degeneration but to clear signs of parliamentary revitalization. (A possible parallel with Italy between 1898 and 1900 is here missed.) The dictatorship resembled its Italian counterpart in several important respects, among them its acceptability to conservative interests, its pursuit of productivity and "developmental" policies, its pursuit of "autarky", and its dependence on a cult of personality.

The differences between *primoderiverismo* and Italian fascism nevertheless emerge as more interesting than the similarities. Primo's régime owed much of its distinctive character to its origins in a military *pronunciamiento*, albeit one hardly of a classic nineteenth-century type. A swiftly and bloodlessly imposed dictatorship, as Ben-Ami points out, "tranquilized those who would otherwise have gone to swell the ranks of fascism"; in Italy, of course, no such tranquilizer was available. Instead of a *modus vivendi* with Spanish socialism. Unlike the Italian corporate machinery, Primo's *comités paritarios* more often than not favoured labour over capital. The rich, whom he had tried, mostly in vain, to tax in order to finance his lavish public works expenditure, abandoned him during the late 1920s, whereupon

*caciquismo* (local "bossism"), Primo's single party merely absorbed existing *caciques* and created new ones. Ben-Ami nevertheless shows how Unión Patriótica did give opportunities to "new men"; how these and other minorities within the organization desired a more "active" party; how the popular basis of *primoderiverismo* "represented the transformation of a traditional conservative spirit into a pre-fascist drive" which would eventually produce the militant clerical fascism of the 1930s – a particularly important point; and how in the dictatorship's final crisis the possibility was considered – and wisely rejected – of attempting to unleash Unión Patriótica in what would presumably have been a Spanish version of Italian fascism's "second wave".

Understandably eager to compare Primo's fall with that of Mussolini, Ben-Ami shirks a more interesting comparison: between the crisis of Primo's régime in 1929 and that of Mussolini's in 1924. In his crisis Primo lacked a violent and inadequately disciplined party capable of being used as a threat (and, perhaps as important, of threatening him). Unión Patriótica resembled not the Italian fascist movement and party of 1919-25 but the acquiescent, middle-aged Fascist party of the 1930s.

The crisis of Primo's régime derived from its loss of the conservative – and royal – support which had originally ensured its success: the kind of support which Mussolini had managed to retain in 1924 but was to lose in 1943. Labour policy was perhaps the key. Following his abortive flirtation with the CGL, the socialist renegade Mussolini from 1924 pursued policies which, beneath the corporatist trappings, were flagrantly anti-labour; Primo, a paternalist to the last and an honest believer in a "third way" between capitalism and "bolshhevism", suppressed anarcho-syndicalism, largely ignored Catholic and "yellow" unionism, and reached a *modus vivendi* with Spanish socialism. Unlike the Italian corporate machinery, Primo's *comités paritarios* more often than not favoured labour over capital. The rich, whom he had tried, mostly in vain, to tax in order to finance his lavish public works expenditure, abandoned him during the late 1920s, whereupon

## Berlin's street-fighters

F. L. Carsten

EVER ROSENHAFT  
*Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and political violence 1929-1933*  
272pp. Cambridge University Press. £24.  
0 521 23638 X

While there is an enormous literature on the German National Socialist Party and its many affiliated organizations, very little scholarly work has been done on its radical counterpart, the German Communist Party (the KPD) – apart from a few German monographs, notably by Siegfried Bahne, Kurt Schuster and Hermann Weber. The publication of a book in English on one aspect of Communist policy is therefore very welcome. The subject of Eve Rosenhaft's *Beating the Fascists?* is the attitude of the KPD to "individual" and "mass" terror and the violent clashes between Communists and the SA in Berlin's working-class quarters in the final years of the Weimar Republic.

Although the KPD officially disapproved of acts of "individual" terror, some were nevertheless perpetrated by Communist militants, the most notorious being the murder of two KPD officers in the square outside KPD headquarters in August 1931. "Mass" terror, however, was officially approved of, but in practice the masses involved were members of the party and its affiliated organizations, in particular the para-military "Red Front Fighters League" and the "Fighting League against Fascism". The targets of this organized terror, at least in Berlin, were often the low-class *Klein- or Stummlokal* (rather oddly translated as "laveries") used by SA units as rallying points and eating and sleeping quarters. One of the declared objects of the National Socialists was the conquest of "red" Berlin, and such "red" places were deliberately placed in "red" working-class streets, as shown in the book. The same *Klein- or Stummlokal* might previously have been

used by the Communists. Because the KPD during the crisis increasingly became a party of the unemployed, its members were unable to afford even beer, and the publicans were tempted to accept SA offers coupled with the guarantee of a large consumption of beer.

It was against such places that the wrath of the inhabitants was turned by the KPD functionaries, and with deadly effect. In one particular case in Neukölln investigated by Dr Rosenhaft from police records and court files (the publican died in consequence of the shooting) the local people and the wider neighbourhood were mobilized, but the actual attack was carried out by rival para-military groups, one consisting of men from another district who would be locally unknown. Its members were only arrested many months later after committing an armed robbery elsewhere. This very interesting fact is mentioned but not commented on by the author. The "Red Front Fighters" in particular – whose organization was dissolved after the May Day riots in Berlin in 1929 – were well known for their links with the *Ringvereine*, the powerful associations of professional criminals.

The detailed analysis of 318 cases of "street-fighters" from the police files shows, not surprisingly, that the large majority were young – 84 per cent were under thirty – and unemployed. So was the large majority of KPD members, a result of its own tactics of calling wild strikes, unsupported by the unions, which usually ended with the sacking and blacklisting of the Communists. But it is interesting that the "street-fighters" did not belong to the *Lumpenproletariat*, the world of beggars, pimps and semi-criminals, but to the ordinary working class of Berlin. They often lived in proletarian class of Berlin, distinguished by a strong neighbourhood solidarity, the so-called *Kleitz* (a word of Slav origin); and the book includes fascinating vignettes of Berlin working-class life as enshrined in the drawings of Heinrich Zille. What the book cannot show – given the

nature of the evidence – is the loyalty of ordinary workers, permanently unemployed and without any claim to social insurance, to their party, whatever the vagaries of its political line: a loyalty which even the Nazi terror was unable to break.

Eve Rosenhaft writes that as early as 1931 "the Party began the first serious preparations for underground activity". In reality, its attitude to "underground" work remained extremely ambiguous. There was its illegal *Apparat* for carrying out activities forbidden by law, such as preparations for an armed uprising, work among the police and armed forces, work in "enemy" organizations, collecting information of interest to Soviet Russia and plain spying. But the party itself was strictly "legal", engaged in propaganda and opposing any attempt to drive it underground. Even when Hitler was already Chancellor all preparations for converting the party into an underground organization – for example by dissolving large street "cells" which met regularly – were expressly prohibited by the party hierarchy; on the grounds that the KPD "could not be forbidden". No resistance whatever was offered to the National Socialist takeover which took the KPD completely by surprise. This fact is mentioned in the book, but its causes are not discussed. A party consisting only of the unemployed could not use the traditional working-class weapon, the strike. But the answer may also be sought in Soviet foreign policy and the close relations between Russia and Germany.

In any case, incipient preparations for sabotage, age actions in Berlin were hastily cancelled, again by order from above. The result clearly would have been fearful retribution, but this came nevertheless, and the party was destroyed.

In general this is a very interesting book, breaking new ground and giving us a vivid picture of the Berlin radical working-class movement before its destruction by Nazi thugs.

## Schools for socialists

Martin Clark

PATRIZIA DOGLIANI  
*La Scuola delle reclute: L'Internazionale giovanile socialista dalla fine dell'Ottocento alla prima guerra mondiale*  
323pp. Turin: Einaudi. L.25,000.  
8 806 05539 9

This is the first detailed account of the Socialist International youth organization in the years before the First World War. It is essentially a narrative of congresses and leaderships, prefaced by some general observations on youth culture, the generation gap and the decline of apprenticeship. The Youth International is not a promising subject, and has been understandably neglected by most historians of the Second International. Normally it consisted of one man, charged with collecting reports and producing a bulletin; and even he spent most of his time organizing the educational efforts of his own national federation. But the Youth International also held three Congresses between 1907 and 1912. They provided a platform for future leaders, and revealed the main preoccupations of the various Socialist organizations throughout Europe.

It seems, from Patrizia Dogliani's account, that Socialist youth-work was mainly propaganda, particularly about the evils of capitalism, religion and drink. There was also a good deal of broader educational activity bringing high culture to the workers, at least in the form of lectures and books. Sport was usually favoured, although some high-minded Socialists complained it was a diversion from true revolutionary activity. In 1910 the Italian federation denounced all sport as a bourgeois plot, likely to cripple young people's health and conducive only to competitiveness and nationalism; it urged youth circles to organize local festivals instead. Much Socialist activity depended on what the Socialists' main rivals were up to, and indeed on who they were – clerical, nationalist or official. Germany was a special case, for after 1908 all political youth movements were banned. Overt propaganda was therefore more difficult, although local bodies often survived, and Trade Unions sometimes helped. The general impression is one of diversity. Swedes, Spaniards, and Swiss had very different concerns, even the French and Germans differed on most issues.

The most important issue, of course, was anti-militarism. Like militarism itself, this meant different things to different people. Karl Liebknecht, addressing the first Congress in 1907, thought that military technology had become so advanced that a major European war was impossible (by 1912 he had changed his mind). To him, conscription was one of the main bourgeois methods of social control: it taught recruits to accept meaningless work, harsh discipline and competitive hierarchies. The first Congress called for the replacement of standing armies by popular militias, a view soon denounced by many young Socialists as sadly lacking in proletarian internationalism. Often the anti-militarists' main concern was to prevent soldiers firing on demonstrators or being used as strike-breakers – a big issue even in Denmark and Switzerland. The Belgian young Socialists simply called for improved conditions of service. In most "Western" countries anti-militarism meant agitating against conservatives and nationalists; but in Poland, Finland and Bohemia it meant semi-nationalist protest against a foreign Power. Socialist youth organizations sometimes accompanied recruits to enlisting points with Red Flags and funeral bands; but they rarely encouraged outright refusal of military service, let alone desertion or mutiny by serving soldiers. And the talk of a general strike in case of war remained just talk.

By 1912-14 the more left-wing young Socialists had moved closer to the anarchists and syndicalists on this issue, but to no avail. The Second Balkan War in 1913 saw various young Socialist federations fighting each other. The International's secretary, in Vienna, had given up trying to mitigate national rivalries within Austria-Hungary, let alone between the Powers. In 1914 the Youth International did not fail to stop war; it did not even try. The moral for our own times is self-evident.



# Looking at the locals

Charles Hargrove

**SAM WHITE**  
Sam White's Paris  
336pp. New English Library. £9.95.  
0450060152

Sam White has long been something of a legend as a chronicler of the Paris scene. Anybody who is anybody in the French capital is familiar with the powerful, now slightly stooping frame, the keen eyes under heavy bushy eyebrows; the hoarse, drawing voice, and his unrepentantly English-accented French. From the incomparable vantage-point of the old Crillon Bar (of which he had become such a fixture that when it was renovated a few years ago, the management gave him the counter and brass rail as a souvenir); and more recently, in the exuberantly convoluted Second Empire setting of the Travellers' Club, he has watched the world go by with unhurried insouciance, and traded the gossip of the day with friends, acquaintances and strangers.

He brought to his task a happy combination of insight, amused - but never supercilious - detachment, a flair for the off-beat story, and an occasional impish taste for the outrageous. Although he was in France for so many years, White succeeded in steering a course between

the pitfalls of francophobia and francophilia to which the British so frequently succumb. He observed men and affairs as they were, and not as he would have wished them to be, without pretence or prejudice. "Although I feel deeply involved in what happens in this country," he writes, "I have never become 'assimilated'; and I still look on France with the eyes of a foreigner."

This broad selection of his despatches to the *Evening Standard* and latterly to the *Spectator* spans the period from the immediate post-Liberation years, with their hardship, rationing and black market, to the demonstrations against Mitterrand's government which erupted last spring. Newspaper articles soon lose their freshness and spontaneity. But White's pieces still entertain, shock at times, and provide a good deal of food for thought about the fragility of reputations and the impermanence of human designs.

This picture of France and the French - with occasional excursions to countries outside the "hexagon", to Eastern Europe, Britain, America, and Australia - is sympathetic and perceptive without being indulgent, and informed without ever being dull; occasionally it is provocative, though without trace of spite. The style is direct, colourful and unpretentious. It eschews literary effects and pseudo-philosophical embellishments. White says what he

has to say and in so doing demolishes a good many stereotypes and destroys some hardy prejudices. France comes alive here, and the French are shown to be intensely human, passionate, excessive, contradictory and infuriating - but altogether appealing. And Paris is a city with a heart, "a lived-in city, a city of Parisians, while London is ceasing to be a city of Londoners and New York has long ceased to be a city of New Yorkers."

These gleanings of thirty-five years have stood the test of time remarkably well. Sometimes White has been a little wide of the mark, as in 1958 when he felt reasonably certain that the year would see the end of the war in Algeria with a ceasefire on French terms. But he was right in predicting that de Gaulle would return; that he would consolidate democracy rather than destroy it and would give independence to Algeria. He perceived the true greatness of de Gaulle long before many Englishmen had overcome their prejudices against him. On his own admission, he was taken by surprise when the students ran amok in the Paris streets in 1968; but he put his finger on the reasons for their behaviour. And after the victory of the Left in 1981, he judged accurately that "Mitterrand's experiment will not follow the banal social democratic one along West German or former British lines. It will involve France in profound social change."

# In fancy dress

Andrew Field

**WILLIAM WISER**  
*The Crazy Years: Paris in the Twenties*  
256pp. Thames and Hudson. £8.95.  
0500013098

*The Crazy Years* is a patchwork quilt put together from the better known, largely biographical, books on expatriates living in Paris in the 1920s. Of the slightly more than a hundred books listed in the bibliography, half have appeared in the last twenty years, and they are all used to supply anecdotes or a complete, potted biographical chapter. The mass of "crazy" anecdotes included provides a representation of the 1920s that is as wobbly and inaccurate as that implied by the "lost generation". Anecdote, or fact in fancy dress when it is not merely fancy, has more to be said for it than many are willing to allow. But the unrelieved anecdotalism in *The Crazy Years* is like a fancy-dress ball held in a station, with as much noise and confusion as there is panache.

Anecdotal books seem to work best when they were written during the period described, for example, Sisley Huddleston's *Bohemian Literary and Social Life in Paris (1928)* and Jimmy Charters's *This Must Be the Place: Memoirs of Montparnasse (1934)*. But William Wiser, an American expatriate novelist who lives on the Riviera, clearly loves Paris and the era he is writing about and has created a work which brings together writing, painting, music, fashion, politics, and café and social life. Though it is unfortunate to see Anne Chisholm's *Nancy Cunard* encapsulated in just a few pages, there is at least a certain just proportion when this treatment is set beside a similar reduction of Geoffrey Wolff's *Black Sun: The Brief Transit and Violent Eclipse of Harry Crosby*. Others treated in this way are Misia Sert, the Murphys, Coco Chanel, Katherine Mansfield, Diaghilev, and Josephine Baker. Figures such as Satie, Picasso and Hemingway are sketched in at length though in the same manner.

All of the popularly accepted estimates of major figures are repeated without question, and the emphasis is decidedly American. Lindbergh takes up nearly a whole chapter, Gertrude Stein is everywhere, E. E. Cummings yet again takes several pages to lose his virginity, and Fitzgerald once more worries about his sexuality. It will require a later, non-American synthesizer to give a proper place among expatriates to a significant writer like Mary Burt. And why should so much space be given to Natalie Barney while her much more talented English lover Romaine Brooks is "also a portrait painter"?

On the other hand, probably because he is himself an expatriate of long standing, Wiser has a fuller knowledge of the attitude of the French towards Americans than do many of his countrymen: "Frenchmen demonstrate a great love for Americans - immediately after a war-but Scott and Zelda were from that other America France cannot tolerate." One of the strongest sections of *The Crazy Years* is the epilogue, which underscores Wiser's strong sense of place. In it he wanders about Paris commenting on the latter-day fate of various places which featured in the lives of the expatriates, and the book becomes an effective and satisfying guide to many of the important and unimportant buildings of the Modernist movement in art and literature. Wiser visits a cemetery and sees himself with some irony, as one of the culture hunters: "Apollinaire is in Division 86, one of them calls out: 'Did you find Edith Piaf?' asks another." He cares so much about locating things properly that he cannot restrain himself from remarking that Fitzgerald's "sense of Parisian geography fails" him in *Babylon Revisited*.

It is a pity that French writers who were active in Paris during the 1920s have a distinctly minor place in Wiser's chronicle, but that, after all, is perhaps simply an accurate reflection of the limited interaction between English and French-speaking writers in the period.

In the usual manner of Thames and Hudson, this is a handsomely designed volume. *The Crazy Years* is above all a survey and a summary of Paris expatriate life. It is written in a fast-moving way, though it does not explore its subject in depth.

# All in the staging

Peter Holland

**J. MICHAEL WALTON (Editor)**  
*Craig on Theatre*  
192pp. Methuen. £12.50 (paperback, £4.95).  
041349540X

**CHRISTOPHER INNES**  
Edward Gordon Craig  
240pp. Cambridge University Press. £20 (paperback, £6.95).  
0521253713

**EDWARD CRAIG (Editor)**  
Edward Gordon Craig: The Last Eight Years, 1958-1966. Letters from Ellen Gordon Craig 51pp. Andoversford: Whittington Press. £20.  
0904845370

In that world of overbearing egos that makes up the theatre, Edward Gordon Craig is the most egotistical of them all. I have never come across anyone so single-mindedly convinced of his own unerring rightness. He saw himself as uniquely capable of reforming the theatre and his grudging praise of others is always for their partial approximation to his own shining example. The problem is that he was usually right. Our art of theatre is thoroughly permeated with Craig's methods and beliefs, not only in stage design and lighting, where his influence is most immediately evident, but also in theatre design, in directing and even in acting. Though from his self-imposed exile he fulminated against the theatrical establishment that to him appeared so contemptuous of his work, the theatre was advancing in exactly the way he had hoped.

J. Michael Walton's *Craig on Theatre*, a selection from the mass of Craig's writings, shows the view of the exile. Separated from the day-to-day practice of theatre, Craig adopted the motto "After the practice, the theory" for the journal *The Mask*, which he published intermittently for years and most of which he wrote himself. *Craig on Theatre* contains most of his best and most significant writing from *The Mask* and elsewhere. Locked into a view of theatre fixed by late Edwardian styles, Craig's vision of the theatre of the future was increasingly dissociated from his own earlier and others' contemporary practice. His writing became more and more repetitious and occasionally, as in the preface to the English edition of *The Theatre Advancing* (1921), violent and bitter. Walton's choice demonstrates brilliantly the extraordinary strengths of Craig's prose at its best. Energetic, excitable and enthusiastic, his writing has its basis in the patronizing authoritarianism that is so crucial to his ability to survive and, at the same time, a childlike wonder at the magic of theatre (derived ultimately from his emotional dependence on his

mother, Ellen Terry). He can veer between a terrifying dogmatism and an impish wit desperately trying to hold and win the reader's attention and approval. The gaily turns the vision of the theatre of the future into an easily attainable ideal; the bitter mode turns it into a sacred mystery with Craig as its High Priest and the rest of the world as ignorant philistines. The former style is, happily, usually the dominant one. I miss one side of Craig's later work, the fascination with theatre history and, in particular, the early Italian theatre, that took up so much of his time after his son, Edward Craig, joined him to work on *The Mask*. Craig began to explore the connections between the freedoms of his own ideal theatre and possibilities tried but forgotten in the past. His long fascination with puppets found links with what is, for Craig at least, an almost systematic study of *commedia dell'arte*; his dreams for stage machinery capable of realizing his plans found a strong root in Italian Renaissance practice. Walton's judicious introduction would help any reader new to Craig's theories, and the illustrations are useful.

If Walton's book is *Craig on Theatre*, Christopher Innes's study of the productions, *Edward Gordon Craig*, is really "Craig in Theatre". This is the most important book on Craig to appear for years. While his writings have always been more or less accessible (*On the Art of the Theatre* has rarely been out of print), there has until recently been little published on Craig's work as director. Innes's detailed analysis of Craig's theatre work disproves one misunderstanding after another. As director and designer, Craig stands out as inventive, imaginative and endlessly practical. Illustrating his argument with dozens of drawings, stage and costume designs and photographs of the plays in performance, Innes tells us much more about what was done and how it was achieved technically. We have known something about the early work with Martin Shaw, culminating in the delicate simplicity of the production of Laurence Housman's *Beulah* in 1902; with its stars made of individual pieces from a chandelier and its sheep made from sacks with the corners tied to suggest ears. But Innes both studies these shows in greater detail than anyone before and sets them beside Craig's later work: Ibsen's *The Vikings at Helgeland* for his mother, his production of *Hamlet* for Stanislavski and *The Pretenders* in Copenhagen (both of which have been the subject of recent full-length books), and the great unrealized dream of a staged performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. The detailed recreation of past performances is one of the most difficult aims of theatre studies. Innes's book is triumphantly successful.

# Out of stupidity

Trevor James

**JAMES K. BAXTER**  
*Collected Plays*  
Edited by Howard McNaughton  
336pp. Oxford University Press. £32.  
0195380031

Howard McNaughton has performed careful editorial work on James K. Baxter's plays, although his introduction inflates their importance by isolating them from the poetry, increasingly acclaimed in New Zealand and abroad, and from his religious beliefs. Sixteen of the twenty plays Baxter wrote are included in the *Collected Plays* which, complete with the playwright's own introductions and program notes, makes this side of his work easily accessible for the first time.

The years between 1956 and 1968, when these plays were written, were formative ones in the development of New Zealand theatre. This was to Baxter's advantage: he gained acceptance from theatres anxious to promote local drama, and practical and financial help from the expanded services of the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, which advised writers on techniques of radio drama. Despite these advantages, such as *The Devil and Mr. M* (1967), there are weaknesses in the plays. Baxter's mythopoeic imagination found

convincing. Although he adapted devices from Greek dramaturgy, his plays are weak in human development, conflict and action. They are vehicles for his ideas, issuing from an author torn between the desire for social relevance and spiritual reality; in the attempt to combine both, his plays lose dramatic clarity. While they echo many of the political and social issues of the time, such as Vietnam (*The Starlight in Your Eyes*) and feminism (*Mr O'Dwyer's Dancing Party*), they are haunted by the theological anxieties inherent in Baxter's thinking. This division was only resolved off-stage when, from October 1968, barefoot, poorly clothed, wearing a crucifix, making public protests on behalf of the poor, following the regime of fasting and meditation from which his finest religious poetry was to come, Baxter moved towards Jerusalem. As the two roles came together, so the interlude of writing dramas came to an end and his life assumed a form in which social and religious actions were part of a personal (and widely publicized) dramaturgy.

Perhaps the enduring value of Baxter's plays is in their attempted realization of themes central to his poems. While the latter are more trial in his poems. While the latter are more concerned with understanding experience, the plays explore its contradictions or ambiguities through a polemical structure which demonstrates his view that "human stupidity, not divine illumination, is the communal foundation of dramatic art".

The result is evocative in its suggestions about the audience's perceptions of the productions and satisfyingly explicit about the means used. It is also careful not to over-praise. The weaknesses - newly observed rather than the conventional reflex responses to Craig - are treated as systematically as Craig's strengths.

I wish I could say the same of Ellen Gordon Craig's memoir. Put together by her brother, Edward Craig, from her letters to him about their father's last years in Venice, they are indeed "a little memorial to my sister, who so unselfishly spent those years looking after him". They witness yet again the extraordinary affection that Craig could will from other people but they also show that his daughter's unselfishness was met by the most absolute selfishness from him. Of course, Craig was already in his nineties; yet the unpleasant old man seen through his daughter's loving descriptions is too like the callous younger man who is already too well known. As she relates his occasional

# Witness to destitution

Dennis Walder

**ATHOL FUGARD**  
*Notebooks 1960-1977*  
Edited by Mary Benson  
238pp. Faber and Faber. £10 (paperback, £3.95).  
0571132839

Dedicated followers of Athol Fugard have long known of the existence of his notebooks. A tantalizing trickle of extracts has emerged over the years, at first in obscure South African literary journals, then as substantial quotations in the author's introductions to his published plays. In the introduction to *Three Pans of Elizabeth Plays* (1974), Fugard revealed that he began his notebooks during a sojourn in London in 1960. They became "a daily ritual", in which he recorded "sensational fragments, incidents, quotations, speculations". In them he found "the content of all I can possibly say about my work". Since, as he later admitted to Mary Benson, his plays "come from life and from encounters with actual people", the record of that life and those encounters is inevitably of great interest to anyone who has seen or read his plays.

The publication of an edited version of Fugard's *Notebooks 1960-1977* must therefore count as an important literary event. Here, at last, is exposed the secret, slow and painful germination of those remarkable works which have attracted audiences all over the world. From the play which made his name, *The Blood Knot*, to, most recently, *Master Harold*... and the *Boys*, Fugard's art is shown to be the product of a lengthy, patient and disciplined process of responding to apparently trivial, unrecognized characters and incidents - the "textures" (a favourite word) of his environment. It is no surprise to learn that his preferred recreations involve solitary, hidden observation: he is an avid bird-watcher and skin-diver.

But although Fugard seems to reveal a lot, there is much more that remains obscure about these *Notebooks*. They are drastically selective, as is obvious from the fact that the originals are four or five times as long (they are lodged under strict controls, at the National Library Museum in Grahamstown, South Africa). Moreover, as the merest glance at the opening entry - an evocation of Korsten, the "non-white" shanty-town setting of *The Blood Knot* - suggests, some rewriting has been done; many of the words are the same, but the syntax is smoother, the paragraphs less abrupt, than in the earlier published extracts. And as we read on, the differences between this version and the earlier extracts (still in print with the plays) become more marked. Just one example: in his introduction to *A Lesson from Aloes* (1981), Fugard tells us that the "main ideas and images" of the play may be found in four entries in his notebooks, which he then quotes at length, dating them February, May, September and November 1961. A search in the present *Notebooks* - not easy without an index - reveals these entries to have been written in February 1961, March 1965, September 1967 and November 1966.

generous comments about his friends and collaborators of fifty years or more before, one is struck by the insistent lack of warmth that surrounds them. His comment on Count Harry Kessler, publisher of the Cranach Press edition of *Hamlet* illustrated by Craig, as "the only man who helped me - he never failed me" is a fair response to Kessler's support but it is at the same time horrifyingly unfair to all those others who had helped him intellectually, emotionally and financially.

The book has its comic moments: the house besieged by American women tourists, Craig's childish glee over birthday presents and many examples of his rare talent at snubbing people. But the love of his children and the respect and affection of his friends were so little reciprocated that the result is distressing rather than endearing. We do not really need to know any more about this side of Craig, only about his work, the work that Christopher Innes has so effectively presented.

respectively - but were they? The editor, who is a close and trusted friend of Fugard's, is silent on these matters. But we need to know the principles of selection, adaptation, omission and annotation. Presumably Fugard prefers us to guess what, exactly, he wrote down at any particular time. But then he cannot expect us to take this publication as either reliable or authentic. It is, precisely, a version of his notebooks. Fugard has, of course, the right to exclude whatever he wishes from his own notebooks before publishing them; and it is self-evident that he will want to protect the feelings of relatives, friends and acquaintances - not to mention safeguarding the position of individuals who might be compromised politically. But he is himself compromised by not acknowledging the inconsistencies, omissions and rewriting evident here.

Despite all this, there is much of value in the *Notebooks*. Like Camus, whom he both resembles and admires, and who is more frequently referred to than any other writer, Fugard sees his role as essentially that of bearing witness: to the horror and absurdity of a world in which pain, suffering and death coexist with natural beauty and the urge to survive. "My life's work", he records having remarked to his wife Sheila, "was possibly just to witness as truthfully as I could, the nameless and destitute (desperate) of this one little corner of the world." Many of the "nameless and destitute" flit through the *Notebooks*: the Coloured woman on the road from Cradock, her possessions on her head, an unwitting prototype for the heroine of *Boesman and Lena*; the elderly black man from New Brighton, sentenced to five years' imprisonment for belonging to a banned organization, whose coat became the basis of *Serpent Players*' first fully improvised theatre piece and so, ultimately, part of the origin of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*; the Robben Island prisoners who rub their hands instead of clapping so as not to draw the warders' attention to their prison "show", and who are the invisible audience for the play-within-the-play in *The Island*; the couple in the small Karoo town whose humiliation formed the basis of *Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act*.

Unlike his "white liberal" compatriots, such as Nadine Gordimer and Alan Paton, Fugard attends to the lives of these anonymous people, people at the extreme. Yet he too suffers the torments of the liberal conscience: "I turn with fear from the thought of the final reckoning. We will have to pay and with lives and hope and dignity for all these that we destroyed." He disclaims any direct reflection of the major political crises of his time in these *Notebooks*; but his strength is that he locates and identifies the larger movements of his time in terms of the personal, in terms of the image. "This country is in the grip of its worst drought - and that drought is in the human heart... South Africa needs to be loved now, when it is at its ugliest." By staying put, and devoting himself to his craft, Fugard believes he is making a contribution. "Anything that will get people to think and feel for themselves, that will stop them delegating these functions to the politicians, is important to our survival. Theatre can help in this." Can it? That remains to be seen.

# Out of town

Nesta Roberts

**JOHN ARDAGH**  
*Rural France: The People, Places and Character of the Frenchman's France*  
224pp. Century. £12.95.  
0712601015

The Frenchman's France possibly, the visitor's France certainly. Even without its seven-and-a-half pages of practical details, regional attractions, with dates, addresses of tourist offices and the like, the book is a produced volume and the note that a rural restaurant has a *joujous* is sufficient indication of the readership at which this handsome and lavishly illustrated volume is aimed. Here is a manual for the unpackaged, mildly enterprising and tolerably well-heeled holidaymakers whose cars proliferate on the highways and byways of France from May to October. Study it diligently and one can obtain an A level in tourism before boarding the car ferry.

As such it is admirably fitted for its purpose, and to criticize it for providing more information than illumination would be irrelevant, the more so as the information is more serious and wide-ranging and at times more diverting than the norm for the genre. John Ardagh sets the

tone with an introductory chapter on rural life which brings out both its striking regional variations and the speed of change in the post-war years, during which six million people have moved off the land.

Today agriculture employs a mere 8 per cent of France's active population against 35 per cent in 1945. Ardagh is good on the accompanying social transformations in the villages, militant Catholicism, old people's clubs, hopeful young craftsmen from the city moving into deserted farms and cottages, to take a random handful of topics. The current efforts to revive folk traditions are more quaint than often they signal the onset of a terminal condition.

Ardagh has enlisted half-a-dozen contributors to deal with specialist subjects ranging from wines to waterways, also to write a few of the surveys of the more interesting rural areas which make up a good deal of the book. The best of these have intimacy and authority, besides being a source of fascinating *trouvailles* which start hares racing in all directions. Why does the Beauce have the highest suicide rate in France when, by national standards, it is not even a drinking area? Could it be the monotony of that featureless plain? But then what about Holland? Are latter-day Catholics practising their more aberrant rites in the Aude? Is it generations of service as mountain guides that make Savoyards who emigrate to Paris so re-

latable as taxi-drivers (they are the single largest regional group of cab-drivers in the city)? Has Vichy sabotaged its future prospects as a spa by bottling its sovereign mineral water for sale all over France? There is scope for endless speculation of this kind.

The notes on regional writers and artists seem a trifle wayward. We have Courbet in the Jura but no Boudin on the Channel coast; George Sand in the Loire but no Colette in Burgundy, no Mauriac in Bordeaux, no Chateaubriand in Brittany. One could continue; sufficient to say that the section on Périgord is strong on truffles and *foie gras* and prehistoric caves but has no whisper of Montaigne. There is a plethora of illustrations among which the 100 or more in colour tend to be the less interesting, both because, inevitably, the subjects are fairly predictable and because the colour itself is generally not outstanding. The black-and-white photographs, on the other hand, are a constant delight, particularly when they deal with people. Character studies like the four citizens of the Midi lined up outside a stationer's shop and the marvellous pipe-smoking woman spilling abundantly over her kitchen table, or impressions caught on the wing, like the little nun scurrying through one of the pavilions of Vichy, her potion clutched in her hand, can convey as much about French life as any amount of prose.

this could be provided by a coordinated European effort. The French government seems to appreciate this although other European governments do not.

The question remains of how this massive restructuring was accomplished in an economy notoriously resistant to change and once thought to have few natural advantages. One explanation is the increase of free trade within Europe and the competition in industrial products which started before, but was greatly stimulated by the European Coal and Steel Community. Government intervention was in fact essential; this is no morality play for dogmatic free-market enthusiasts. Agriculture benefited from price fixing and from a whole series of boards, committees, laws and grants. And the same goes for industry, where intervention has also been crucial, more pragmatic and less "cartesian", than is usually argued.

This book ends by asking questions about the future. Despite its extensive and purposeless nationalizations, the Socialist government has approached the economy with conventional Keynesian assumptions, though without an effective policy for incomes and this, notwithstanding current blustering about the franc and the money supply, is where the problem lies for the 1980s as France tries to re-define its role in the international climate.

# Thirty glorious years

David Bell

**JOHN TUPPEN**  
*The Economic Geography of France*  
383pp. Croom Helm/Barnes and Noble.  
£16.95.  
0709241217

Despite a bombardment of acronyms (INRA, DAGG, SCR, SDMIYAC, CNARRE, DIA, ISM, SAR, SIGA, etc) this is a solid account of the French post-war economic transformation. There is very little jargon, apart from a tendency to throw in such superfluous words as "real" and "spatial", and for this reason among others *The Economic Geography of France* will be useful for teaching courses on post-war France and especially a text for students who want a quick account of the French economy. John Tuppen takes a sector-by-sector approach and discusses, in turn, agriculture, industry and the services (especially tourism). The "Trente Glorieuses" of 1945-75 were years of unprecedented economic growth in France (and they had nothing to do with de Gaulle's economic policy). Agriculture was transformed from a quasi-subsistence peasant system employing about one-third of the labour force, there arose the efficient sector-

mind and capitalist agriculture of today's France (although it still has a very backward sector) which occupies about 9 per cent of the labour force and has a quite different output. Those who left the land went into industry and, increasingly after the mid-1930s, into service industries. Hence agricultural productivity was increased, at no cost, and labour released. Industry, hitherto timid and uncompetitive, was prodded and pushed into a series of changes. Light industry, the aerospace industry and engineering grew while a massive regrouping went ahead rapidly and foreign capital was drawn in.

In all of this government played an active role. "Whatever their formal ideological allegiance (usually centre-right), French governments approached the economy without that reverence for the free market which is currently the British touchstone for unimpaired thinking. Pompidou, Giscard and the hard-right government of the Fourth Republic all set up boards, committees and so on to encourage modernization, and largely they succeeded. The French economy participated in the expansion of world trade after the war and the problems the Socialist government there now faces cannot be solved by a retreat from the international economy. France, like the rest of Europe, awaits an upturn in world trade and



# Woodland ways

Patricia Craig

BARBARA WILLARD  
The Queen of the Pharisees' Children  
130pp. Julia MacRae. £6.25.  
086203 1486.

"The Queen of the Pharisees", or Fairies, is an affectionate nickname bestowed on blithe Moll Swayne by her itinerant husband Sim, owner of a horse and cart and prier of a dicey trade: sharpening blades and mending pots and skillets. The time is the middle of the seventeenth century, the setting Sussex – if we're to go by the plethora of "surelies" and other colourful mispronunciations, reminiscent of Sheila Kaye-Smith. The Swayne children – all of them called after the nearest convenient object at the time of their birth – Will for Willow, Delphi for the name *Philadelphia* carved on a tombstone and read out by an angry sexton, and so on – live in the open, winter and summer.

What saves Sim Swayne from the charge of vagrancy, and consequent imprisonment, is his possession of the cart: when thieves make off with this, and the old horse too, things become hard for the innocent little family. The Swaynes are resourceful in the woods and fields, and pretty hopeless elsewhere. Nuts and mushrooms, rabbits and pigeons are their usual fare. They find refuge in a barn, as winter comes on, and milk for the ailing baby is hard

to get; but someone in the district means to do them harm. Their presence lowers the tone of the smallholding, and arouses vindictiveness in the new husband of their widowed benefactress. There is no more dancing in fairy rings for Moll Swayne, and no more romping in open air for the children.

A distressing episode follows, after which "the Queen of the Pharisees' children" are scattered; two survive and two do not. The story of how Will Swayne begins to put off his woodland ways, as he learns to appreciate the benefits of orthodox living, makes refreshing reading. First he acquires some rent-free garments, then he loses his fear of a chiming clock; eventually he gains control of his thoughts and learns to express himself coherently. A beneficent clergyman has taken him in hand, and all at once his future seems secure. But is the price exacted – "the loss of his kinship with the wild" – too high? You don't look for easy answers in this lucid novel, which is considerably less bland in feeling than the usual historical offering – posset-rich and very fanciful – based on the intriguing vicissitudes of some poor-but-blameless boy. It is a pity that Barbara Willard has kept all her idiosyncratic touches for the tinkler family, and spared none at all for the upright minister and his household, which runs a bit too true-to-type. The story, too, might have been expanded to good effect in the final sections. Still, the book, like the Queen of the Pharisees' singing, more often than not strikes a happy note: high, strange and clear.

# A humanizing influence

Kicki Moxon Brown

CHARLES E. MARTIN  
Dunkel Takes a Walk  
Julia MacRae. £4.95.  
086203 1370  
HIAWYN ORAM  
Ned and the Joybaloo  
Julia MacRae. £4.95.  
086264 0482

On a small scale, *Dunkel Takes a Walk* is in the tradition of a classic fairy tale. It uses a traditional human story as framework, and casts as the "clever peasant" a rather unpromising-looking sausage dog named Dunkel, who gets the better of the wicked creatures of the forest three times. Although warned against entering the dark forest, and feeling frightened at the thought of doing so, Dunkel goes inside. There he is captured briefly by, in turn, a lion, an elephant and a wolf, all of whom he temporarily distracts so that he can escape. Safely back home, he dreams of a great picnic in his meadow, where the surprise guests are the three savage beasts, now grinning merrily. By confronting his fears, Dunkel has dispelled them.

As in all stories with animal heroes, part of the amusement lies in spotting the degree of humanizing that is needed. Dunkel appears fairly doglike at all times until the end of the story. Back at his cottagey-kennel (complete with chimney) he is pictured standing on his back legs, waving at some mice. And in his dream on the last page he is presiding over the table wearing a chef's hat and an apron – elevated perhaps to honorary humanhood after his previous rites in the forest. In spite of its high dramatic content, this is a gentle, low-key story with flashes of affectionate humour in the pictures.

*Ned and the Joybaloo* conveys the message that if you try to have fun all the time, you end up having no fun at all. Ned is an ordinary, not terribly well-behaved little boy who finds a curious creature in the airing cupboard. The Joybaloo is "big and beautiful" with a funny leathery nose and "its breath full of paper roses". They get a wonderful time together, and arrange to meet each Friday. But soon Ned wants to play with the Joybaloo all the time despite its protestations that it will get "used up". It gets smaller and smaller until one day it is not there at all. Ned comes to realize that he must make his own fun and settles down to more constructive play. Confident that the Joybaloo will come back one day when it has had a rest.

The text by Hiawyn Oram is a nice mixture of the poetic and the down-to-earth, tautly written and just right for reading aloud. There are echoes of Sendak: "their laughter propelled them up, up and on past everyday night and every night dreams to the playgrounds of the Joybaloo." Satoshi Kitamura was hailed last year as "the most exciting newcomer to children's book illustration", when *Angry Arthur* won the Mother Goose Award. *Ned and the Joybaloo* shows a similarly high degree of individuality. Perspectives are deliberately ignored. Interiors nestle cheek-by-jowl with exteriors. The focus is always on what is subjective and relevant from the protagonist's point of view. If Ned moves from one room to another his attention (and therefore ours) is fixed on one small area and then on another. The wall between the rooms is simply irrelevant so it is left out of the picture. Typically in one cohesive picture there are eleven Neds, simultaneously in the living room, in the garden, up a ladder, down the cellar, all shown without clear boundaries, the sofa nudging the lawn and the garden wall jutting out against the dining table. Finally, as Ned and the Joybaloo huddle through space, even the surface of the earth is displaced giving way to the space-travellers by inverting its curve into a tunnel. The sheer explosiveness of the pictures makes the climax of the book quite frightening: a totally empty airing cupboard with half of a bewildered Ned in the doorway, pathetic-looking in slippers and with arms hanging awkwardly at his sides. Hiawyn Oram and Satoshi Kitamura have produced two books which are distinctive and original and it is good to know that there is a third in the making to look forward to.

Cover to Cover Cassettes specializes in producing readings on tape of complete and unabridged texts for adults and children. Their first titles include *Pride and Prejudice* read by Irene Sutcliffe; *Wuthering Heights*, read by Patricia Routledge; and *Rat from the Madding Crowd*, read by Stephen Thorne. Their children's tapes include *The Owl Who was Afraid of the Dark* by Jill Tomlinson, read by Margaret Linnam; *Just So Stories* by Rudyard Kipling, read by Johnny Morris; and *Stig of the Dump* by Clive King, read by Martin Jarvis. Titles due to be published on April 1 include *Great Expectations*, *Jane Eyre*, *Mr. on the Floor*, *Elvis*, *Stanley* by Jeff Brown and *The Worst Week* by Jill Murphy. The cassettes are sold by mail order and further details are available from Cover to Cover Cassettes Limited, Townsend Poulshor, Daventry, Wiltshire, SN10 1PR.

# Starters and stayers

Alan Brownjohn

BERNARD ASHLEY  
Your Guess is as Good as Mine  
42pp. Julia MacRae. £3.50.  
086203 1396  
JANE GARDAM  
Kit  
42pp. Julia MacRae. £3.50.  
086203 132 X  
RUSKIN BOND  
Tigers Forever  
42pp. Julia MacRae. £3.50.  
086203 1338

These three "Redwing" books represent a commendable attempt to produce brief and lucid, yet respectably imaginative, stories for young children (of seven or eight) who will read the text for themselves but will still appreciate helpful illustrations to complement it. None of them is more than about six thousand words long, each has a simple storyline which focuses on a central theme or incident, and each concerns a principal child character with whom readers may in varying degrees identify. Readers of this age respond to strong plots; but a credibility of character and vividness of atmosphere may command a more lasting affection. Which of these is likely to prove the stayer?

Bernard Ashley's *Your Guess is as Good as Mine* is strong on ingenuity of plotting and admirably tactful in its presentation of some important and delicate issues. Nicky comes out of school alone into a thunderstorm. Frightened by the lightning, he accepts a lift from a friendly-seeming stranger who drives a yellow Mini almost mistakable for his father's – and in no time he is whisked away out of town towards the marshes. Nothing is coarsely or clumsily done in the account of the drive: it is just, very discreetly, very alarming indeed, "like a bad ride at the fair when there was no stopping the roundabout". A coincidental resemblance of the stranger's car number to part of the headmistress's name enables the vehicle (with the help of the all-seeing police computer) to be traced to its destination, and allows Nicky to be rescued from a horror which his father declines to speculate on; Nicky's guess is as good as his. "There are more sick people about than there are bolts of lightning heading for you."

Ashley even manages some sort of minimal compassion towards Nicky's abductor, though he remains repulsive and terrifying enough to provide an effective warning. *Your Guess is as Good as Mine* is a cautionary tale told with thorough understanding of just how the worst might happen, and how children might be

saved by learning how to recognize it. But it is doubtful whether its readers will go back to it after they have absorbed the message (and forgotten the plot and characters in which the author clothes it). Jane Gardam's *Kit* is weaker in construction – even a very short novel cannot afford to stop dead in the way this one does when its small crisis is over – but it is continually subtle, accurate, and enjoyable in its detail, and children may remember the warm and boisterous atmosphere of the farm high up in the Dales when the baldly-sketched background of Nicky's suburban streets has faded from memory.

The eponymous "Kit" of Jane Gardam's story is really Catherine: the title is her nickname for being timid and kitchiness, liable to cry over small things. As most readers may be presumed to live in towns, Kit's farm family (father, mother and little sister Lisa) and its routines need to be explained, sometimes with awkward, instructional pauses: "a clart by the way is a cow pat", "a sneek is a latch". But what builds up with surprising completeness is the rather scanty plot develops in a convincing picture of the pleasures and privations of a farm life in 1983, when breakfast television in the kitchen is no consolation at all if father's broken leg is in traction and all the animals have to be fed in the torrential rain. In the end, the cry-baby Kit proves her resourcefulness and courage by coping with the rampaging bull. This is a stock conclusion (much as it may satisfy young readers who know their own timidity); but the best of *Kit* has been in the richness and humour of its evocation of existence in the high, wet farmstead which is quietly suggested in William Geldart's excellent illustrations.

*Tigers Forever* goes farther afield, to the foothills of the Himalayas, where young Nandu (and young Chottu) take care of the village buffalo herd and watch out for the last remaining, elderly yet dangerous, man-eating tiger of the district. Chottu is rescued from possible death when the tiger chases away a mother bear, so the creature is regarded as a protector. When it has killed two buffalo and been hounded away by the villagers, it is "as though a protector had gone". There is subtlety here, in the perception of the changing relations between man and his environment once the wild beasts have been eliminated from the scene; but Ruskin Bond writes a very plain tale about these foothills, putting little life or colour into character or incident. The tiger itself is allowed a happy ending – "the smell of a tigress" – and Valerie Littlewood's neat and pleasing drawings at least give it a reality which it lacks in a pedestrian narrative.

# Rites of passage

Colin Greenland

MARTIN WADDELL and PHILIPPE DUPASQUIER  
Going West  
Andersen Press. £4.95.  
086264 0520

This is Kate's story of her family in Mr Crowe's wagon train, "going West to look for better land". It is a story of high adventure – a swollen river, a buffalo stampede, an Indian attack; yet the least romantic and most conscientious wagon train story imaginable. Martin Waddell has deliberately made Kate the representative witness of a whole social history. What she experiences is danger, loss and death, but also new gains and achievements, signified by relics and gifts passed on by people who are themselves passing on. She sets everything down carefully. "Lottie and Mrs Sullivan drank bad water. They got sick. I didn't get sick." The language is elementary, appropriate to a little girl's diary (and to an early reading book); but also elemental, bare, summoning the reader's own emotional responses.

*Going West* is a picture book and Philippe Dupasquier's illustrations hold up the same balance, panoramas of generalized but authentic beauty demonstrating the perilous nature of the task by the sheer scale of landscape while close scenes show people working together,

pulling a wagon out of mud or praying around the campfire. Dupasquier's loose, soft technique of brown inks and watercolour has an attractive casualness which disguises careful planning. Kate's wagon is red, and the only one pulled by oxen, making it easy to find even in long-distance views. A tiny figure on top of a bluff is the Indian scout whose people will ambush and destroy most of the train seven pages later. ("Big Chokey says we stole the Indians' land. They don't like us. That is why they killed Mr Crowe.") While Big Chokey shows Kate the things he keeps in his hollow wooden leg, there is Louisa in the background pointing out the fatal waterhole to Mrs Sullivan. Nearby skulls mutely signal the disaster to come.

Of some twenty wagonloads only Kate's family gets through to the fertile valley, with Mrs Sullivan and the redoubtable Big Chokey. "Big Chokey gave me his leg. He made himself a new one. Then he went on." This is a book to be read with an enquiring child, who will want a good deal of commentary: on the American frontier, wilderness survival, Indian burial customs, deserts and blizzards, and the facts of death.

The closing date for entries to the fourth annual children's art competition organized by Dulux Paints and the National Gallery is May 1, 1984. Further details are available from Education Department, National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London WC2.

# Roman and rococo

Nicolas Barker

JOHN DREYFUS  
Aspects of French Eighteenth Century  
Typography  
135pp. Quaritch for the Roxburghe Club.  
£120.

France led the world in applied art in the eighteenth century, and not least in the design of printed matter. French printers and book-sellers, however, did not benefit from this as much as they wished or deserved. This was mainly due to a close and, within limits, effective system of censorship. Books that were dangerous for the French trade to undertake were printed outside France, in Switzerland, the Low Countries or even England. Even so, French books, with their novel typography, elegant ornaments and decorative plates, found their way all over Europe. Their influence was immediately acknowledged by imitation. All this activity is sparsely documented, and, since both pirates and pirated had good reason to conceal their movements, surviving documents are an imperfect source from which to reconstruct the history of French printing in the period. The specimens of the typefounders, therefore, who provided the *matériel* for French printers (and sometimes for those outside France) have a particular importance, especially when the founders recount in them, as they sometimes do, more or less accurately (since their object is publicity), what they are trying to achieve and why.

The late Albert Ehrman, a great book-collector in many ways, had a keen and catholic interest in the history and form of the printed word, and typefounders' specimens, both as a record and for their aesthetic appeal, attracted him particularly. His twenty (no mean total) eighteenth-century French specimens form the basis of John Dreyfus's admirable study, *Aspects of French Eighteenth Century Typography*, presented to the Roxburghe Club

by John Ehrman – a double act of generosity, since it is thanks to his son that this part of Albert Ehrman's collection is now in the Cambridge University Library.

The French primacy in book design at the beginning of the eighteenth century was due to the *Imprimerie Royale* and the distinctive *romain du roi*. This design, jealously and effectively protected by the Crown, underlay the intensive experiments in letter-design of Louis Luce and Simon-Pierre Fournier *le jeune*. Luce, conservative in taste but ingenious in execution, particularly of the composite rococo ornaments that clearly fascinated him, worked for the *Imprimerie Royale*. Fournier *le jeune*, on the other hand, was too independent-minded even to work in his elder brother's typefoundry, and set up on his own in 1736, at the age of twenty-four. His father's death seven years earlier had disappointed him of a career as an artist, and there is a picturesque quality about his designs both for letters and ornaments which gives them an immediately distinctive calligraphic appeal. This quality certainly attracted his contemporaries, printers and typefounders alike, who bought and pirated his types. If he is chiefly remembered as a designer, Fournier's reputation also rests on his gifts as a historian and publicist that led him to compile his *Manuel Typographique* (1764-8) – which might serve as the model of the French rococo book.

Fournier is the central and most sympathetic figure of Dreyfus's narrative, and the story ends with the sober, not to say sombre, events that followed the pioneering work of the brothers F.-A. and P.-F. Didot, to whom the vertically stressed "modern face" design was due. The origins of the actual design of the letter can be seen in the *romain du roi*, but the typographic use of it owes more to the monumental classical texts printed by John Baskerville of Birmingham, then (1780) at the height of their reputation. Beaumarchais's purchase of the actual types of Baskerville and their adoption for the *Revolutions Moniteur*

# The colonial trade

Roger E. Stoddard

WILLIAM L. JOYCE, DAVID D. HALL,  
RICHARD D. BROWN and JOHN B. HENCH  
(Editors)  
Printing and Society in Early America  
322pp. Charlottesville: University Press of  
Virginia for the American Antiquarian Society  
(distributed in the UK by TABS). \$32.50.  
0912265 530

The American book-trade was a colonial branch of England's, and its independence lagged well behind the political settlement of 1783. Not for generations could Americans afford to publish lengthy musical compositions, Bibles, or even the most popular multi-volume novels. Intensive reading, study and memorization of the Bible, Isaac Watts and a discreet number of steady-selling devotional texts gave way to the extensive reading, skimming and sampling of newspapers, fiction and a variety of competing secular and religious matter. In the nineteenth century this abundance and diversity of print rose to meet an abundance and diversity of population, as inefficient, hand-operated equipment was replaced by efficient, power-driven machines, and printing extended communication along new roads, canals and railroads.

This handsome new volume, printed with the clarity expected of the Stinchess Press, collects eight papers from a Worcester conference of the American Antiquarian Society in 1980. Stephen Botein helps us understand the choice of exports to America: an English agent made the highest profits on his own copyright books; Elizabeth Carroll Reilly analyses the customers (151 Harvard students, 89 ministers, etc.) and stock (457 Doddridge *Family Religion*, etc.) from the credit book and estate inventory of a Boston bookseller of the 1760s. She stresses the importance of newspaper advertising to the bookshop, as do Cynthia Z. Stover and Gregory A. Stover, who show that imported books provided the highest income and that most of the American books

were local imprints at the Williamsburg bookshop in the 1750s and 1760s. Robert B. Winans admits that, in the eighteenth century, novels eroded the market for steady-selling devotional works, but he shows that it was more profitable to import the longer novels than to finance their printing in America. Richard Crawford and D. W. Krummel offer a polished essay, "Early American Music Printing and Publishing", that sets a new standard for genre studies. "Books and the Social Authority of Learning" is a treacherous subject, but Rhys Isaac sets us thinking about memorization, recitation, reading and book learning in the churches, households, schools and courthouses of Virginia in the middle of the eighteenth century. Nathan O. Hatch shows that religious journalism brought religious content into the market to compete with secular matter for popularity. Donald M. Scott finds that the success of the public lecture system in the middle of the nineteenth century depended on advertisements and features in newspapers. In his summary essay, "From Cohesion to Competition", Richard D. Brown clinches the volume by pointing to the "emerging awareness that the question of who reads what and why lies at the heart of understanding our history".

Many of these shards, together with pieces of English and French book history, are assembled in a preliminary essay, "The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1600-1850", by David D. Hall, chairman of the American Antiquarian Society's new Program in the History of the Book in American Culture. The success of the French book history programme may be attributed to the genius of Henri-Jean Martin and the congeries of research institutes, journals, study programmes and conferences assembled about him. The American Antiquarian Society, already the major supporter of national bibliographical studies, is assuming that leadership role for America by projecting lectures, workshops, seminars, beginning with a publications and fellowships, beginning with a "needs and opportunities" conference this year to culminate in a multi-volume, collaborative history in 1990.

*Universel* made an ironic end to a century in which France had been the major exporter of type-designs in Europe.

The most entertaining and original part of this book deals with the sources of French typographic ornament and its relation to the styles current in architecture and interior design. Two trends can be traced: the contrast between two- and three-dimensional motifs (a sort of double *trompe-l'oeil*), and the exploration of repetition. Repetition, the use of a single basic ornament to convey a continuous design, is another form of *trompe-l'oeil*, with a geometric base that Dreyfus ingeniously traces to Sebastian Truchet, one of the committee responsible for the design of the *romain du roi*. Luce's gift for the combination of typographic elements in this way has never been surpassed. The sense of design that Luce showed, matched with a secure technical grasp of the possibilities of combining cast metal pieces originating from engraved punches, has never been equalled, although he was not above "improving" his work with pen and ink.

Altogether, this is an original chapter in the history of typography, and its presentation a notable tribute to John Dreyfus's talents not only as a writer but as a typographic designer: the presswork and binding are an equal credit to the Cambridge University Press.

# Prime movers

David Helliwell

DENIS TWITCHETT  
Printing and Publishing in Medieval China  
94pp. Lund Humphries. Paperback, £7.95.  
0 85331 440 3

L. Carrington Goodrich's revision of Thomas Francis Carter's *Invention of Printing in China and its Spread Westward* has been the standard text on this subject for nearly thirty years, in which time it has become seriously out of date. Denis Twitchett has reworked the existing evidence and incorporated subsequent archaeological discoveries to provide an account of medieval Chinese printing for the general reader, based on a talk given to the Wynkyn de Worde Society in 1977.

Beginning with its invention in the mid-T'ang (early eighth century), the history of Chinese printing is taken to its heyday in the Sung (960-1278), and a description is given of the three large-scale projects of the tenth century which were to ensure the primacy of printing in the dissemination of the written word: the printing of the Confucian Classics, the Buddhist Tripiṭaka and the Taoist Canon. Thus far Professor Twitchett's text is succinct, systematic and generously provided with appropriate illustrations. But he then begins to exceed the scope of his title, and as the work progresses it includes ever briefer accounts of subjects such as the printing of currency, Korean printing and the use of metal movable type, which are so vast and consequential that they are ill-accommodated in the text of a single lecture, even for a non-specialist audience. The author has, however, quite rightly described Pi Sheng's invention of movable type in the 1040s, and concludes his work by giving some of the reasons why the woodblock technique, so rapidly superseded in the West, remained standard in the East until modern times.

It is unfortunate that the value of this book in a field astonishingly neglected by Western scholars should be let down by the quality of its production. An inferior process has been used for the illustrations, whose heavy, over-linked appearance scarcely conveys the sophistication of the Sung originals, even as reproduced in the secondary sources from which they are largely derived. Two typographic eccentricities are also quite out of place in a work which is, after all, about the Golden Age of Chinese printing: the *yin-yang* symbols which precede each section heading are presumably to remind the layman that the book is about China; but the circles at the beginning of each paragraph have a less obvious function, and give the page an unpleasantly cluttered appearance. The choice of a classic format for a work of this kind would have been preferable.

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The seventh volume of Jacob Black's authoritative *Bibliography of American Literature* (768pp): Yale University Press. £65. 0 300 02636 6 takes the alphabetical sequence from James Kirk Paulding (1778-1860) to Frank Richard Stockton (1834-1902), including Poe, W. S. Porter (O. Henry), Prescott, Mrs Sogorney and W. G. S. Simms. In succession to the late Dr Black, this volume is edited by Virginia L. Smyers and Michael Winship.